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MILITARY HISTORY

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On the cover: In 57 BC Julius Caesar led eight legions in a punitive expedition against Belgae/Gallic rebels on the Sabis River in Gaul (in present-day France) and was nearly annihilated. (Lanmas, Alamy Stock Photo; Inset: U.S. Navy, Naval History and Heritage Command)

Join the discussion at
militaryhistory.com



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Letters



Patchwork History



I need help identifying my grandfather's World War II Italian army unit.

On a whim, we recently made an impromptu visit to my grandfather's former home (he came to America in 1947 and moved back to Italy in the 1970s). The current homeowner surprised us with the photo above. She said her husband found it in a basement crawl space. We had heard stories of my grandfather's service but had no evidence, until now.

He rarely discussed his service, and he probably hid the photo so no one would find it. He was captured in North Africa in 1943 and released from service in 1944. (Ironically, I had relatives in the U.S. Army in the North African theater serving at the same time.)

The unit portrait looks like it was taken in front of a bar-

racks, and a message on the wall with Benito Mussolini's name is visible on the wall. They are holding up what I presume to be a unit flag. I've also attached a cropped image of the divisional patch from my grandfather's left uniform coat sleeve.

G. Jack Urso
ALBANY, N.Y.

Editor responds: Jack, a thorough search of wartime Italian insignia turned up a match (see above) for the patch on your grandfather's uniform. He served with the 133rd Armored Division Littorio, which entered the war in France as a reserve unit, then participated in the 1941 invasion of Yugoslavia. Sent to North Africa in the spring of 1942, the unit was destroyed at the Second Battle of El Alamein that fall. Your grandfather may have kept mum about

his Italian service in part due to its ties to the Mussolini government, but also because of his unit's fate. He likely lost scores of friends in North Africa. The No. 3 pennant the men are holding in the image may be that of the division's 3rd Artillery Regiment, or perhaps the III Cavalry Squadron. One more educated guess: As the portrait was taken during wartime, it's possible that white mark across the top of your grandfather's patch is a piece of tape used to conceal the word "Littorio" and thus the division's identity.

Kamikaze

[Re. "Death Before Dishonor," by Jon Guttman, January 2020:] What a moving set of photos selected to illustrate what arguably was the biggest threat to strategic success our Navy has ever faced—the World War II kamikaze campaign.

The kamikaze concept was not universally accepted by surviving Japanese veteran pilots of both army and navy leadership—men like Imperial Japanese Navy Capt. Minoru Genda, who planned the attack on Pearl Harbor. Even some admirals and generals opposed it.

In spite of their unarmored decks, none of the modern U.S. Essex-class carriers were sunk by the kamikaze campaign, although many were hit. Several went unrepaired until after the war, while two, Bunker Hill and Franklin, were beyond repair and ultimately scrapped. As Gutt-

man noted, superior damage control saved the day for the U.S. Navy.

The escort carrier fleet, built on merchant ship hulls, was much more vulnerable to kamikaze strike and suffered significant losses, as did our destroyers.

Col. Wayne Long
U.S. Army (Ret.)
HAVERFORD, PA.

Jon Guttman responds: Pleased to know the portfolio was to your satisfaction.

I recall reading that roughly 70 percent of Japanese naval pilots volunteered for the honor of crashing into the enemy, whereas 70 percent of the army pilots did so only under direct orders. That said, the Japanese sometimes had to reiterate to their surviving fighter pilots with proven skill and experience the importance of not sacrificing their lives in "special attack," but to fly the escort missions and try to keep the Grumman F6F-5s and Vought F4U-1As from slaughtering all those newly trained kamikazes before they got near the U.S. task force.

Between what the Americans and British had and what the Soviets would unleash as of Aug. 9, 1945, there was no getting away from it—with or without this martial seppuku, Japan's situation was beyond hopeless.

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News

By Brendan Maciej

PETREL PINPOINTS MIDWAY TARGETS KAGA AND AKAGI

The crew of the research vessel *Petrel*—owned by the estate of Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen and operated by Vulcan Inc.—has found the World War II wrecks of the Japanese aircraft carriers *Kaga* and *Akagi*, both sunk during the pivotal June 4–7, 1942, Battle of Midway. *Petrel*'s team spent weeks surveying more than 500 square nautical miles of the central Pacific battle site, which lies within the vast Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument west of Hawaii. *Kaga* and *Akagi* rest at more than 17,000 feet below the surface.

The four Japanese fleet carriers sunk at Midway—*Kaga*, *Akagi*, *Soryu* and *Hiryu*—represented two-thirds of the six-carrier force that had attacked Pearl Harbor six months earlier. American planes also sank the Japanese heavy cruiser *Mikuma*, while the Japanese submarine *I-168* sank the U.S. carrier *Yorktown* and destroyer *Hammann*. The loss of *Akagi*—severely damaged by a U.S. dive bomber and later scuttled by Japanese destroyers—is particularly noteworthy, as it was Vice Adm. Chuichi Nagumo's flagship.

Despite the size of the Japanese carriers, *Petrel*'s crew had to survey more than 500 square nautical miles for them. The finds come as Hollywood releases a remake of the 1976 epic *Midway*.

Petrel's latest finds join an ever-growing roster of historic wrecks its researchers have located, including the destroyer USS *Ward*, which fired the first American shots of the Pacific War on the morning of the Pearl Harbor attack; the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet*, noted for having launched the 1942 Doolittle Raid against Japan; and the heavy cruiser USS *Indianapolis*, which was torpedoed and sunk in the Philippine Sea four days after delivering components for the *Little Boy* atomic bomb to Tinian in the Northern Marianas. *Petrel*'s team also recovered the bell from the battlecruiser HMS *Hood*, sunk in 1941 by the German battleship *Bismarck* with the loss of all but three of its 1,418-man crew. The bell is on display at the National Museum of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth.

‘Our citizens can now rejoice that a momentous victory is in the making’

—U.S. Navy Adm. Chester W. Nimitz, regarding Midway

Pearl Survivors Hold Final Meet

The San Diego chapter of the national Pearl Harbor Survivors Association (founded in 1958) held its last meeting in September 2019. Once the largest chapter, boasting 586 members, it now numbers just seven, only one of whom—President Stuart Hedley, 98—is mobile enough to serve



in an official capacity. The association, which once counted 18,000 members in dozens of chapters nationwide, ceased operations in 2011. Fewer than 2,500 survivors remain alive.

Series Honors Eighth Air Force

Executive producers Steven Spielberg, Tom Hanks and Gary Goetzman recently premiered *Masters of the Air* via the video-on-demand service Apple TV+, hoping to mirror the success of their World War II miniseries *Band of Brothers* (2001) and *The Pacific* (2010). Based on the eponymous book by Donald L. Miller, *Masters* spotlights the aviators of the U.S. Eighth Air Force, whose crews suffered more than 47,000 casualties—nearly half of the U.S. Army Air Forces' total wartime casualties.



BUNKER HILL MUSKET FETCHES HALF-MILLION

Morphy Auctions has realized \$492,000 for a Dutch Type III .79-caliber smoothbore musket, bayonet and soldier's commission put up for auction by a descendant of Patriot militiaman Pvt. John Simpson, who used the weapon to fire the first shot at the June 17, 1775, Battle of Bunker Hill during the siege of Boston. Simpson served in the 1st New Hampshire Regiment under Col. John Stark (see P. 42). Though field officers had purportedly ordered their men to hold fire "until you see the whites of their eyes," Simpson jumped the gun as British troops advanced, touching off the bloody clash. Admonished for his disobedience, he served with honor in the American Revolutionary War, rising to the rank of major in the New Hampshire militia.

FRANCO REMAINS MOVED FROM STATE MAUSOLEUM

The Spanish government has exhumed the remains of fascist former dictator Gen. Francisco Franco (1892–1975) from a mausoleum in the Valley of the Fallen, a state-owned basilica and national monument northwest of Madrid—resting place of some 40,000 people killed on either side of the 1936–39 Spanish Civil War. The *caudillo* was the only person buried in the valley not to have died in the war. Franco's family reinterred his remains beside those of his wife, Carmen Polo, in Madrid's El Pardo municipal cemetery. The controversial move by the ruling socialist government comes amid Spain's ongoing attempts to reconcile its politically divisive past.



WAR RECORD

Feb. 25, 1943

Japanese prisoners riot at a POW camp in Featherston, New Zealand, leading to the death of 48 inmates and one guard. The incident prompts heightened security at the **POW camp in Cowra, Australia** (P. 64), from which some 1,100 Japanese seek to escape in 1944.

March 1919

In a direct provocation of the American Expeditionary Force, Siberia, Bolshevik partisan firebrand Yakov Tryapitsyn demands the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Suchan coal mining district. That June a Red Army unit in the region ambushes a U.S. Army camp, sparking the **Battle of Romanovka** (P. 32).

March 1941

The Italian navy sets out to upgrade its anti-torpedo defenses in Taranto Harbor. British Fairey Swordfish biplane torpedo bombers had ravaged its fleet there the prior November in the **Battle of Taranto** (P. 50).

March 22, 1777

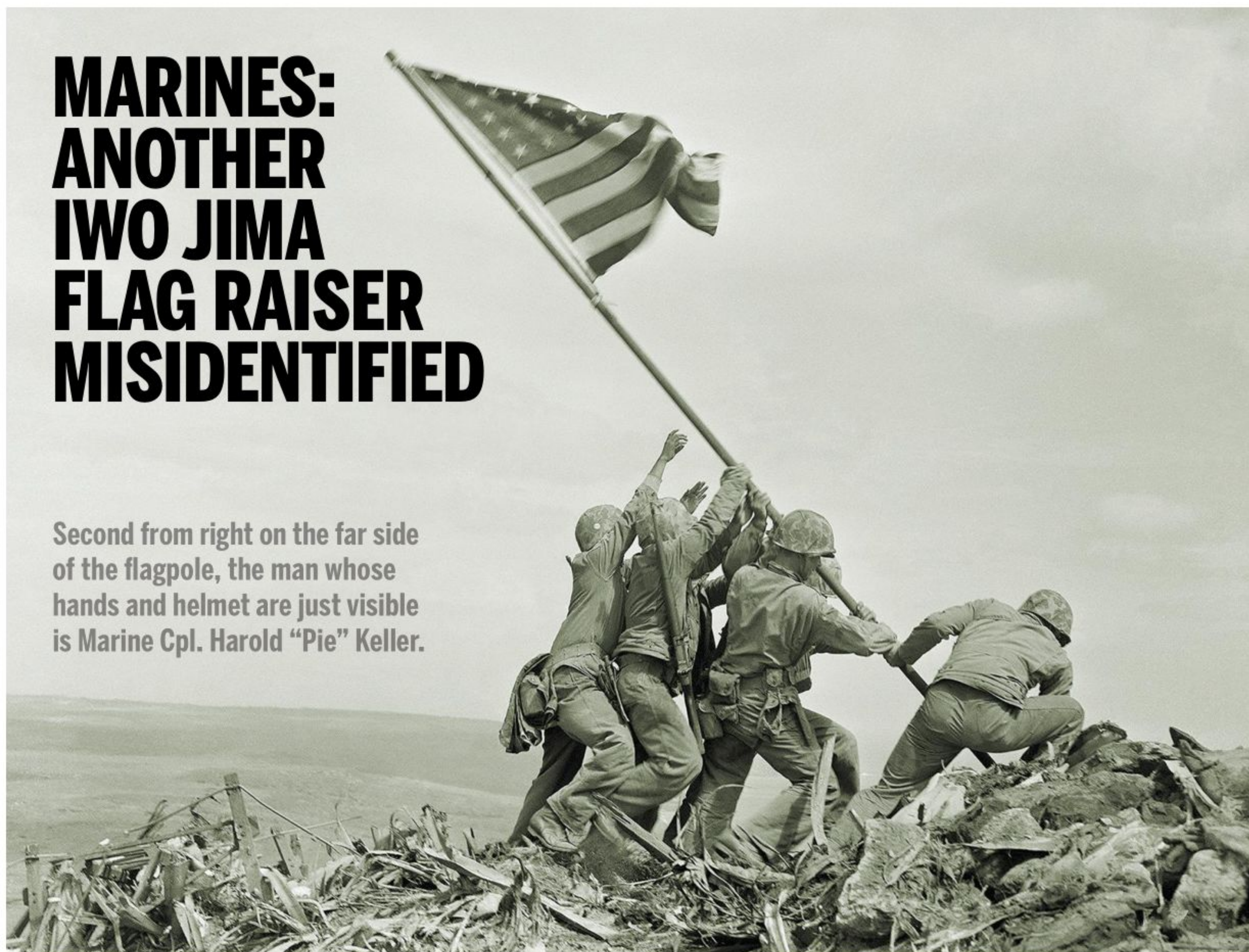
Colonel John Stark of the 1st New Hampshire Regiment resigns in disgust after being passed over for promotion. He returns to serve as a brigadier general and leads Patriot troops to victory at the Aug. 16, 1777, **Battle of Bennington** (P. 42).

March 31, 1992

The battleship **USS Missouri** (P. 58), aboard which Japanese officials surrendered to end World War II, is decommissioned for the last time. It now operates as a museum ship at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

MARINES: ANOTHER IWO JIMA FLAG RAISER MISIDENTIFIED

Second from right on the far side of the flagpole, the man whose hands and helmet are just visible is Marine Cpl. Harold “Pie” Keller.



The U.S. Marine Corps has corrected the identity another of the half-dozen men in Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal’s iconic photo of Marines raising the U.S. flag atop Mount Suribachi on Feb. 23, 1945, during the Battle of Iwo Jima. The Corps originally named Pfc. René A. Gagnon as the Marine on the far side of the flagpole with part of his helmet showing, but it recently concluded that man was in fact Cpl. Harold “Pie” Keller. The Marines made a similar correction in 2016, announcing that Pfc. Harold Schultz, not Navy corpsman John Bradley, was the man second from the left. The photograph depicts the second of two flag raisings that day; Bradley had participated in the first, but not the second.

From their amphibious landing on Feb. 19, 1945, the Marines spent a costly five weeks wresting the island from a deeply entrenched 21,000-strong Japanese force. The Americans suffered 6,821 killed in action and another 19,217 wounded, while nearly all the Japanese defenders were killed or committed suicide. Of the six men originally identified in Rosenthal’s photo, only three—Ira Hayes, Gagnon and Bradley—survived the battle. Realizing the propaganda value of the image, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the trio stateside to pitch war bonds to a nation that hailed them as heroes. Their story has since been chronicled in the book and film *Flags of Our Fathers*.

Historians Stephen Foley, Dustin Spence and Brent Westemeyer brought the Gagnon discrepancy to the Corps’ attention, sharing previously unseen private photos that sparked a two-year investigation by the Marines and FBI. The correction in no way diminishes the contributions of Gagnon, who according to the Corps was “directly responsible for getting the larger second flag to the top and returning the first flag for safekeeping.”

‘The raising of that flag on Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next 500 years’

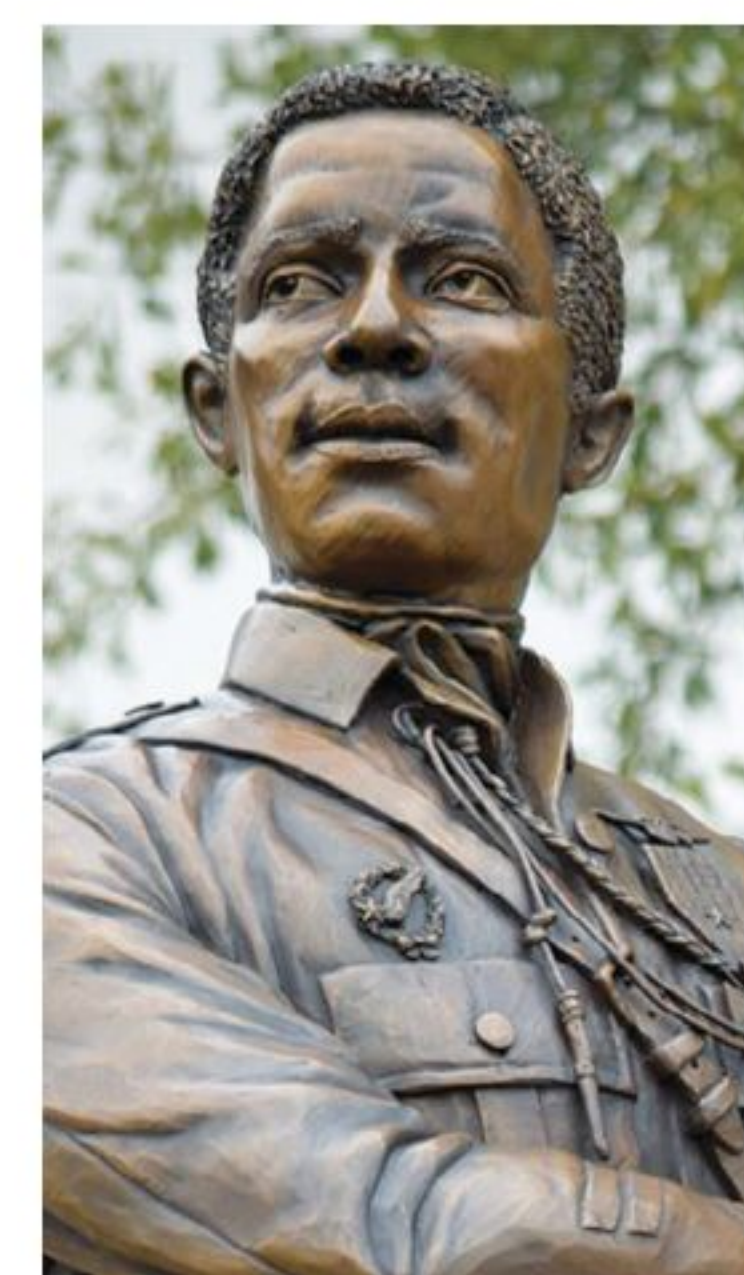
—Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal

Texas to Host MOH Museum

The National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation has chosen Arlington, Texas, as the future home of the planned facility. Expected to open in 2024, the \$150 million museum in the city’s entertainment district will honor the 3,500-plus recipients of the nation’s highest award for combat valor. Texas claims 75 of those recipients, as well as some 1.8 million veterans and active duty military.

Air Force Honors Pioneering Pilot

Robins Air Force Base, east of Warner Robins, Ga., recently unveiled a bronze statue of Eugene Bullard, the world’s first black fighter pilot. At the outset of World War I in 1914 the Georgia native initially enlisted in the



French Foreign Legion, serving as a machine gunner during the Somme, Champagne and Verdun campaigns. After being wounded at Verdun in 1916, he volunteered for the French Air Service, later joining 269 fellow Americans in the Lafayette Flying Corps.

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News

U.S. IDs Korean War Remains

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) has identified 41 U.S. troops whose remains were among those returned by North Korea in July 2018. The turnover of 55 cases of Korean War remains and artifacts—a goodwill gesture by North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in the wake of his landmark June 2018 summit with U.S. President Donald Trump—marked the first significant return of wartime remains from that communist nation since 2007.

Nuremberg Recordings Made Public

The French sound restoration firm Gecko has completed a two-year



effort to digitize audio recordings of the 1945–46 Nuremberg trials of prominent Nazi leaders. Previously stored on 2,000 discs at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Netherlands, the recordings will be available to listeners at The Hague, Paris' Memorial of the Shoah and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

D-DAY DISPATCH TAPE FOUND IN BASEMENT



The National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Va., has added to its archives the master recording of a firsthand D-Day dispatch by American war correspondent George Hicks, as well as other period recordings and related artifacts discovered in the basement of a Long Island, N.Y., cabin retreat. Homeowner Bruce Campbell found and donated the trove, left behind by former owner the late Albert Stern, vice president of the firm that manufactured the Recordgraph equipment the correspondent used. On June 6, 1944, Hicks—then London bureau chief for ABC precursor the Blue Network—taped his dispatch off Normandy from the communications ship USS *Ancon*, which served as the flagship for U.S. forces landing at Omaha Beach. The 13-minute, 29-second recording captures the ferocity of battle, including a German air assault.



WWII TANK CREW HONORED FOR DUEL

In a recent ceremony at the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., the U.S. Army presented the Bronze Star to 96-year-old World War II tank gunner Cpl. Clarence E. Smoyer and the families of his fellow crewmen—bow gunner Pfc. Homer L. Davis, gun loader Pfc. John S. DeRiggi and driver Tech. Cpl. William D. McVey. On March 6, 1945, the four manned their M26 Pershing tank to victory over a Panther tank in Cologne, Germany. The Army had already awarded the Bronze Star to two others tied to the action—tank commander Staff Sgt. Robert M. Earley, who scouted the enemy vehicle on foot, and cameraman Tech. Sgt. James L. Bates, who filmed the action. The crew's story is documented in the book *Spearhead*, by Adam Makos.

LETHAL RELICS

When properly disarmed, artillery shells and other war relics can make a nice addition to a mantel or bookshelf. That said, such relics can remain lethal even after decades in the ground. Unexploded ordnance kills tens of thousands of people worldwide each year. Consider the following object lessons:

Disastrous Disarming

Two ordnance disposal specialists with the Polish army's 6th Airborne Battalion were recently killed while attempting to disarm a World War II-era bomb found in a forest in southern Poland.

Tragic Restoration

In 2008 Civil War collector Sam White was killed outside his Chester, Va., home when a 9-inch, 75-pound naval cannonball he was restoring exploded, raining down shrapnel on homes as far as a quarter-mile away.

Belgian Blaze

The fields of Flanders, Belgium, hold countless lethal relics from World War I. In 2007 Jozef Verdruc of Loker was killed by a shell buried on his property when its charge was ignited by a bonfire he'd lit in his garden.

Time Bombs

In Germany unexploded Allied aerial bombs from World War II regularly turn up at building sites. That's what killed three Göttingen bomb disposal experts in 2010 and a construction worker in Euskirchen who struck a bomb with his excavator in 2014.

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Interview Worth It

Interview by Dave Kindy



Kyle Carpenter

Lance Cpl. William Kyle Carpenter doesn't remember throwing himself between a buddy and a hand grenade on a village rooftop in Afghanistan's Helmand Province on Nov. 21, 2010. Yet two military forensic teams determined that's exactly what he did. Carpenter was on lookout duty with Lance Cpl. Nick Eufrazio when the grenade landed beside them. Kyle's efforts to shield Eufrazio, say investigators, saved his friend's life, though both suffered life-threatening injuries. Carpenter's courage earned him the Medal of Honor, which President Barack Obama presented him in 2014. He is the youngest living recipient of the award. Carpenter has published a book about his experiences. *You Are Worth It: Building a Life Worth Fighting For*, co-written by Don Yaeger, relates Kyle's recovery and his positive outlook on life. Carpenter has become a popular speaker dedicated to helping others overcome the challenges in their lives.

What made you enlist in the Marines?

I decided to enlist because I wanted to commit my life to a greater purpose. Specifically, I chose the Marine Corps because I've always thrived on challenge. I wanted something that would push me to my physical, mental and emotional limits. I wanted something that would push me to the point of having to look deep down inside myself so I could get through hard times whenever they came. After going to multiple recruiters and multiple branches, I knew the Marine Corps was the path for me.

You wanted to experience combat. Why?

I didn't really want to go into combat, but I knew that path would give me the challenge I believed I was searching for. The thought of combat, getting hurt or killed, were such surreal ideas. Based on what 19-year-old Kyle knew back then, I felt like that path was also a way to be close to where I could truly help someone who was suffering.

What was it like serving in Helmand Province?

From a combat perspective, every single day was a constant and vicious fight for survival. We had no showers for seven months. Any supplies we needed—bottles of water, food and ammo—had to be dropped to us by helicopter because we were so far in enemy territory. There was no infrastructure and no roads, so nothing could get to us except by air, including medevacs. Unfortunately, we suffered a lot of casualties. But it wasn't all combat, combat, combat. Something that was equally as difficult for me to comprehend was seeing how the people were extremely oppressed. They feared for their lives because their kids wanted to learn how

to read. They worked in their fields all day afraid to come home to find their family killed—beheaded or thrown from the tallest building in the city. That was extremely difficult and challenging to see. I continue to struggle with it.

Every single day we engaged in fire-fights. At times it was for many hours. It was never a question of if we were going to get shot at, it was just a matter of when. If we got into trouble, we had to rely on two mortarmen at the patrol base or air support. That was it. We were one of the first units in Marjah at Helmand. We were laying the foundation and hopefully stability for future deployments. It was very primitive, going village to village and pushing the bad guys out.

What do you remember about Nov. 21, 2010?

Nick Eufrazio and I were on top of a roof on a post position. We were standing guard for all the Marines inside the compound of a village we had moved into two days before. We were near the end of our four-hour shift. I don't really remember anything from that day. All I really recall is how my body felt after the grenade detonated. There were extensive and thorough investigations—two years and 250 pages of testimony—by the Marine Corps and Department of Defense. A grenade was thrown on the roof in close proximity to Nick and me, who were laying down behind a barrier of sandbags.

After the grenade detonated, I was very confused. I tried to put the pieces together about what happened. Those thoughts were interrupted by what I thought was warm water being poured all over me. Then I realized it wasn't water but blood: I was bleeding out. I realized my time was limited. I thought about my family, specifically my moth-



er and how devastated she would be that I didn't come home. I said a quick prayer for forgiveness for anything I had done wrong in my life. Then I felt a tiredness that is impossible to recount or convey. At that moment I faded from consciousness and the world on a hot, dusty rooftop in Afghanistan. I woke up roughly five weeks later at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. My first sight, as I opened the only eye I had left, was Christmas stockings my mom had hung in my room. That started my three-year and roughly 40-operation recovery period.

What were your first thoughts on waking up in the hospital?

I was extremely disoriented from my injuries and medication. Even though I couldn't remember what happened, I realized my life and body had been drastically altered. Above everything, I thought, *Wow, I'm still here*, after I believed the lights were about to go out.

How extensive were your injuries?

Like Nick, I had a traumatic brain injury. I had shrapnel in my brain. The doctors surgically removed what they could. Some pieces were left in there. Both eardrums were ruptured. I lost my right eye. Much of my face was fractured. My jaw was almost completely blown off. Most of my teeth were blown out. I had a hole blown in my carotid artery, in my neck. I had extensive bone and tissue damage on both arms. I had a fully collapsed right lung. And I had tissue damage to both of my legs. I received 12 units of blood. I died three times but was revived each time.

Were you surprised to learn you would receive the Medal of Honor?

Because I was facing such a daunting and unfathomable road ahead of me, my brain compartmentalized things. I was living minute to minute, day to day, surgery to surgery. I started getting calls

Carpenter was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines, 1st Marine Division.

telling me about the official investigations. A buddy told me what the Marines saw, what they believed happened, and that I should be put up for the Medal of Honor. When I got that call, I was still extremely fragile and banged up. It was kind of like, *OK, I know this is going to go nowhere*. I knew how much it takes to just get a Navy Commendation Medal in combat. I was honored, humbled and flattered they thought that much of me. But it was like, *Thank you, I really appreciate it, but I have a recovery to get back to*. It was also very strange to have that told to me and not have any recollection of that moment.

How did you feel when the medal was placed around your neck?

I've always known the medal wasn't mine. By that time I was a sophomore in college. I was still emotionally and men-



President Barack Obama awarded Carpenter the Medal of Honor at a White House ceremony on June 19, 2014.

tally healing and figuring out what this new body and life mean to me. Everything was so chaotic. After the ceremony I realized it represents not only my journey, but also my family's journey. It represents the Marines that were there with me, serving and sacrificing. It represents the people of Afghanistan and all people around the world who live in fear and hope to taste freedom. It represents our military, our country and all the generations of service members who raised their right hand and offered to give up their lives. It represents all Marines who covered grenades in Vietnam, or those Marines in World War II who were told they probably wouldn't make it off their landing craft. They charged forward and did it anyway, because they knew there was a cause bigger than any one individual. It represents those who gave the last full measure for their country and are still missing in action. I'm so honored and humbled my country has recognized me. This medal is a heavy and beautiful burden.

What do you mean when you say you're living on "bonus time"?

It has been a journey. Much of my out-

look on life comes from the perspective I was forced to find while searching through darkness and pain. At the time they were just experiences, but then healing turned them into life lessons. Now I'm thankful those hard times taught me something. This experience has taught me that the smallest of steps completes the grandest of journeys. My ears might still ring, I might be blind in one eye, I might wake up with pain every day for the rest of my life, but I am here, and I am alive. Every day is an opportunity. To be thinking I was taking my last breath at 21 and then to wake up and find I'm still here, it's almost hard for me not to be positive. I tell people, "You might be different physically, mentally and emotionally, but you can come back better and stronger than before."

What's next for you?

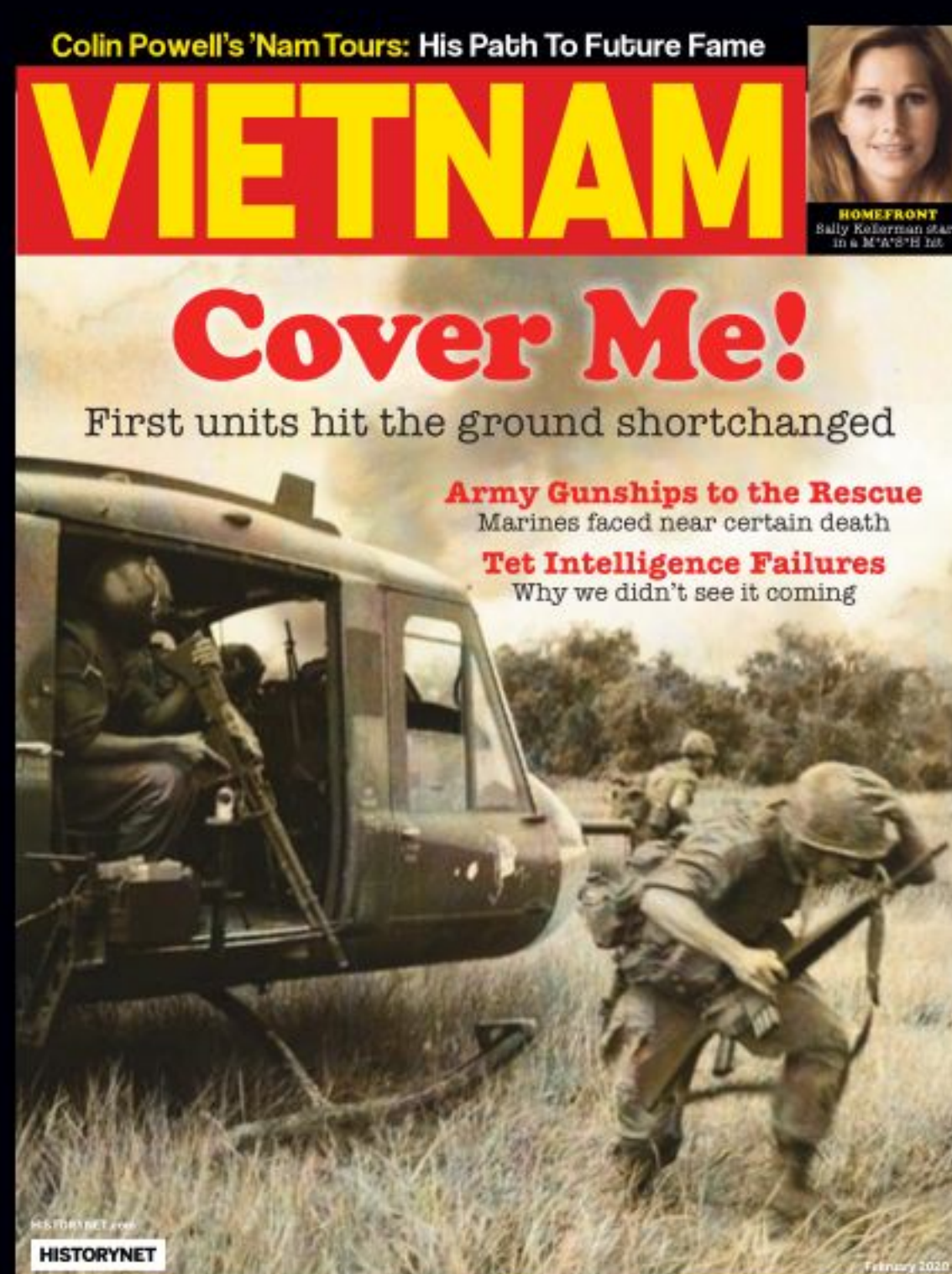
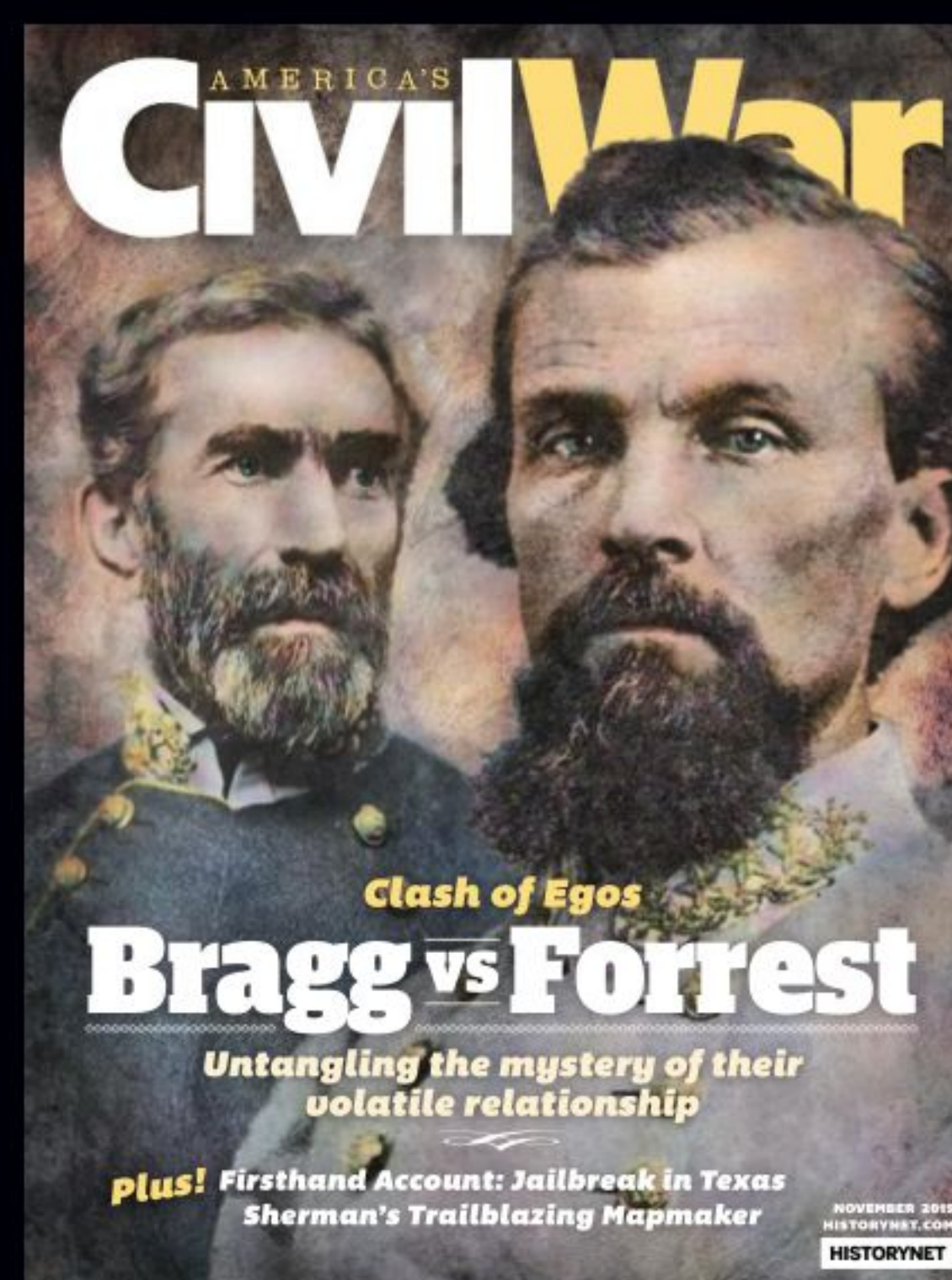
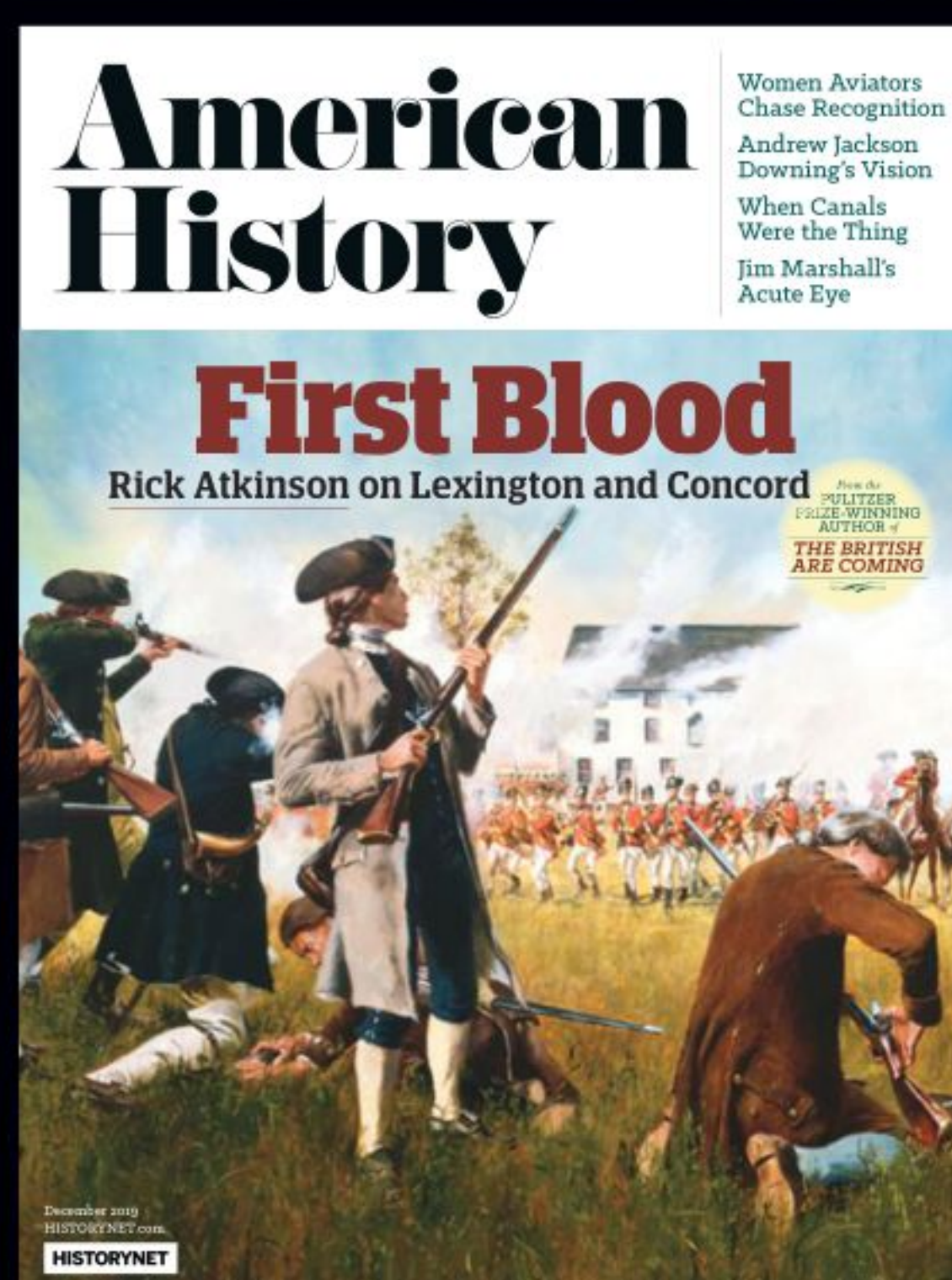
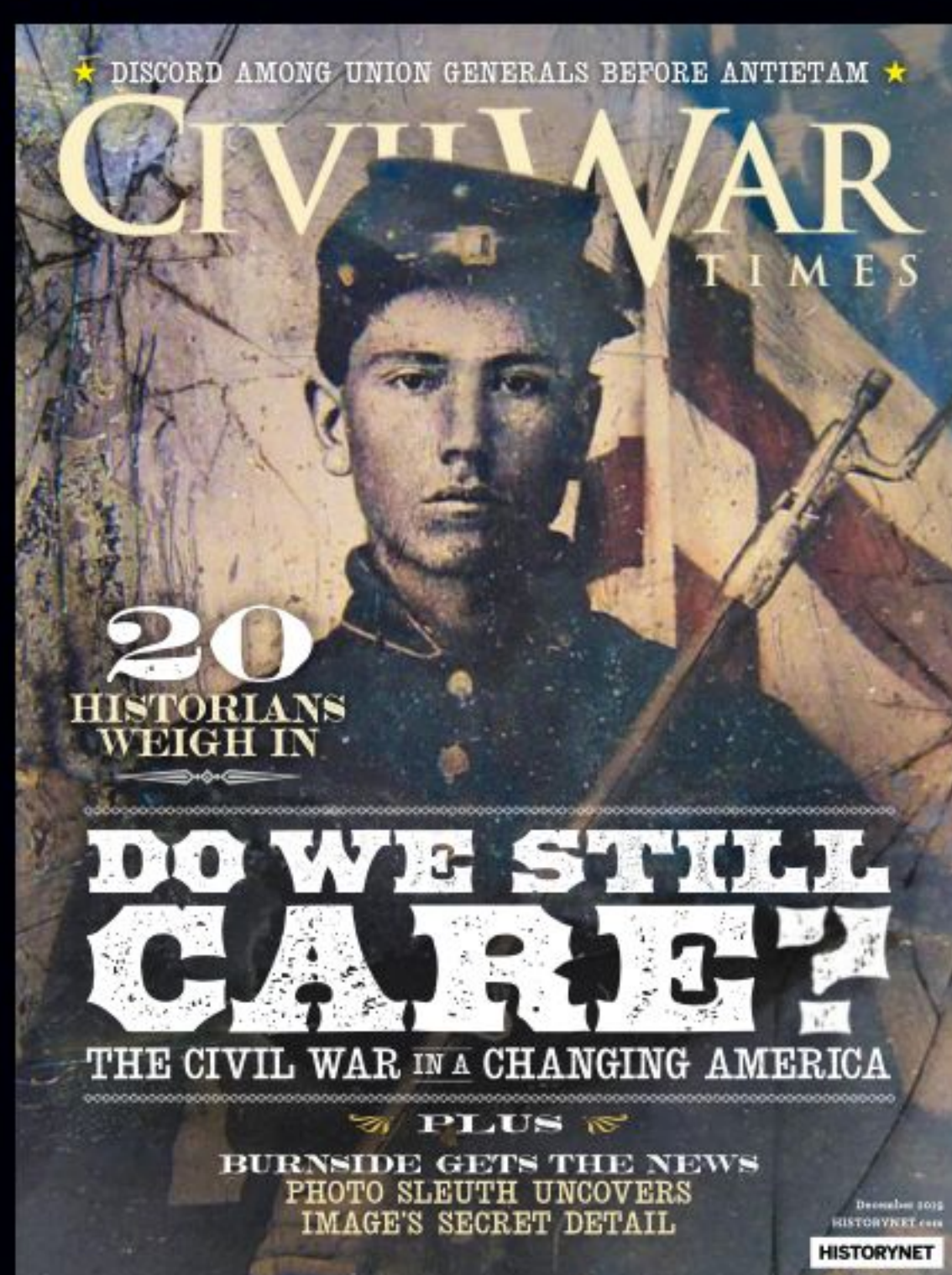
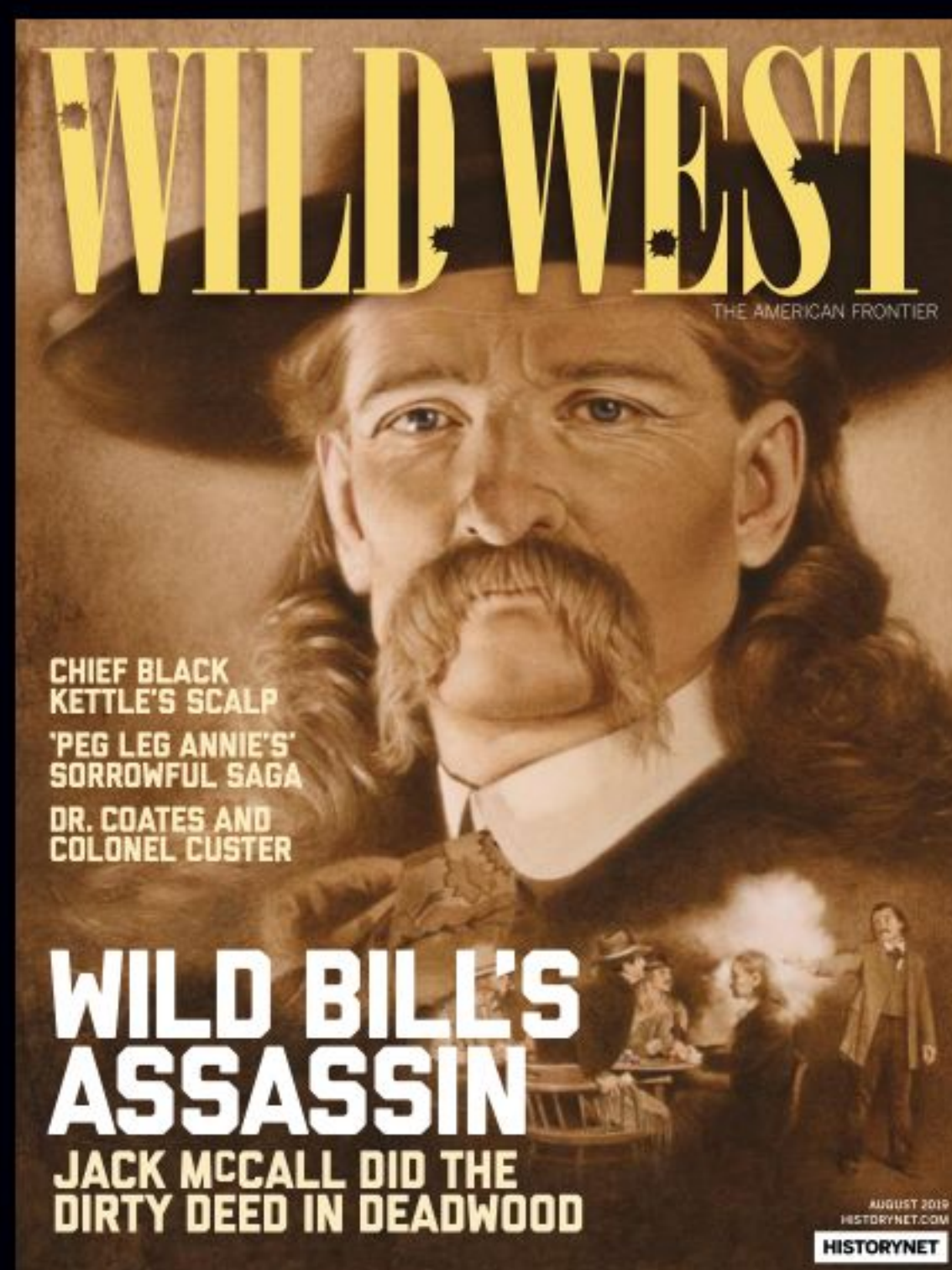
My greatest fear in life has always been regret. But now, as I look back, knowing what it felt like to think I was taking my last breath, I can add a second fear to that list: unfulfilled potential. It's an amazing bonus to be able to help people through my life. Not every-

one has been in combat, but everyone struggles. In addition to helping people, I just want to live a life well lived. I want to do things that help me reclaim my life and help me realize I am living a bonus round right now.

What message do you have for fellow Americans?

For all those people who supported me and picked me up along the way, I am forever grateful. I will spend the rest of my life saying thanks, but I know that will never be enough. It's a journey of the human spirit. You never know what you can go through as a person. You never know when you are going to be a hero for someone else. People say to me, "I could never do what you did." You don't know that. I didn't know that. That's the beautiful thing about people. You don't have to jump on a grenade to be an amazing person to someone else. You just have to take that small step forward. If you're going through something, know that you can make it through by taking small steps. Try to see the positive in things and the good in people, and it will take you somewhere good. The tough times teach us beautiful lessons. **MH**

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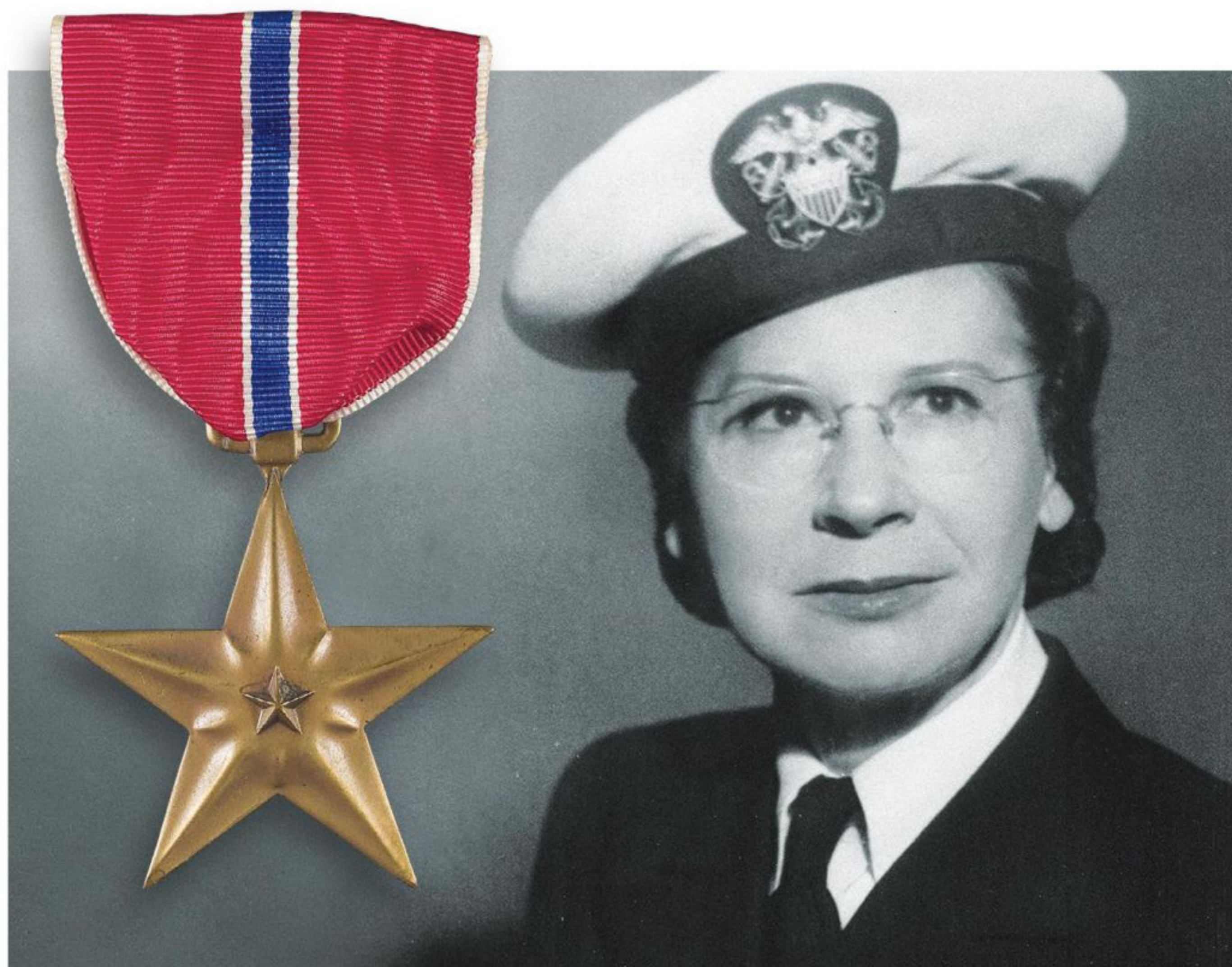


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Valor The Heroic Navy Nurse

By Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi



Lt. Cmdr. Laura Cobb
U.S. Navy Nurse Corps
Bronze Star
Philippines
1942–45

In March 1942, soon after U.S. forces in the Philippines surrendered to the Japanese, Chief Nurse Laura Mae Cobb of the Cañacao Naval Hospital in Manila Bay was sent with 11 other nurses to a civilian internment camp on the grounds of Santo Tomas University. There 49-year-old Cobb directed

her nurses to care for some 3,000 captive civilian men, women and children.

Many of the internees were alone, hungry and traumatized. At times they had only the kindness of a nurse on which to rely. In turn, the Navy nurses had Cobb to watch over them. Whenever possible, she squirreled away extra food, money and supplies. Though the Japanese forbade private papers of any kind, the chief nurse risked punishment by smuggling her nurses' service records into camp. When the Japanese ordered Cobb to provide them an inventory of medicines, she had her nurses mislabel bottles of the antimalarial drug quinine as baking soda to protect it from being looted by the enemy. Had the Japanese discovered the deception, they likely would have executed the American chief nurse.

In May 1943 the Santo Tomas commandant announced he would transfer 800 male prisoners to Los Baños, a camp under construction some 40 miles to the south. That posed a dilemma, as the civilian physician accompanying the men did not have any medical personnel to assist him. The Army nurses interned at Santo Tomas had refused the assignment. Cobb asked her Navy nurses if they were willing to risk it, and they all agreed. Three civilian nurses joined them. On the morning the nurses left camp, someone managed to play "Anchors Aweigh" on the camp PA system, and the internees lined up to cheer. Cobb strolled out to the truck with her nurses' service records hidden beneath her uniform blouse, a flower garland concealing the otherwise conspicuous rectangular imprint.

At the new camp the nurses cobbled together a makeshift hospital from scratch, fitting together pipes to make bed frames, mixing tree sap to create

bandage adhesive and fashioning slings from donated scraps. Demand for the infirmary grew as the Japanese transferred ever more prisoners to Los Baños and a sadistic new officer took charge. Among other abuses, Lt. Sadaaki Koniishi withheld salt from internees and reduced their food rations to less than 900 calories per person a day. Cobb and her nurses became increasingly important to the 2,100-plus men being starved to death.

Their deliverance finally came on Feb. 23, 1945, in a morning raid by U.S. paratroopers and Filipino guerrillas. The freed civilians were evacuated to the newly liberated Bilibid POW camp, just outside Manila. There the Navy nurses assumed five-hour shifts until Cobb insisted the women themselves receive the medical care they so badly required. None of the nurses weighed more than 100 pounds (some well under). One had undiagnosed tuberculosis, others beriberi. Cobb herself had an undiagnosed heart ailment and arthritis. The Navy soon evacuated the nurses stateside, where Cobb was promoted to lieutenant commander. Her foresight in hiding personnel records enabled her nurses to receive the back pay and promotions they'd missed while being held captive.

In September 1945 the Navy and Army presented Cobb and her nurses the Bronze Star with a gold star device (in lieu of a second award). While the intrepid chief nurse never considered herself a hero, the citation accompanying her medal praised her "dauntless determination, zealous efforts and unselfish devotion to duty in the face of unprecedented hardship." Though she had hoped to return to the Philippines with the Navy, her arthritis proved too debilitating, and she retired at the rank of commander in 1947. Cobb spent nearly 30 years in the civilian nursing field. She died in 1981 at age 89. **MH**

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What We Learned From... The Battle of Legnano, 1176

By Chris Allsop



Legnano was a close call for Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I, but it taught him lessons he would remember for a lifetime.

For Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I the May 29, 1176, Battle of Legnano was a turning point—one that nearly cost him his life.

Frederick was the most powerful figure in 12th century Europe. Though his Germanic domain spanned central Europe from the Baltic Sea south to the Mediterranean, he aspired to regain the broader Roman empire Charlemagne had ruled in the 9th century. One step toward realizing that ambition was control of the Italian peninsula—an objective that brought his army of 8,000 knights across the Alps into Piedmont in 1174.

During four previous campaigns in Italy the emperor had demonstrated the well-rounded statesmanship that has earned him historians' widespread regard. The city-states—ever prepared to turn on one another for advantage—had proven amenable to alliances with Frederick. It was they who later bestowed on him the epithet “Barbarossa” (Italian for “red beard”). In May 1167 Frederick had culminated his fourth campaign with a victory over the anti-imperialist Pope Alexander III and the Commune of Rome at Monte Porzio, southeast of the capital. After occupying Rome, however, the imperial army had been swept by sudden illness (possibly the plague), forcing Frederick and his men to flee the city. That December, with the support of the pope, the embattled northern city-states had formed the Lombard League for mutual defense against the Germanic incursions.

The fifth expedition began well in 1174, Frederick's army taking the northwestern city-states of Susa and Asti. But his advance halted at Alessandria, a newly built Piedmont fortress defended by the Milanese, who successfully resisted a six-month siege. Flummoxed by his inability to take the city—and after failing to negotiate a truce—Frederick left his main force in Pavia and traveled north to meet reinforcements. He soon turned back at the head of 3,000 men, mostly heavy cavalry.

Getting wind of his plans, and unwilling to await reinforcements from all members of the league, the Milanese resolved to intercept Frederick with a 3,500-strong force. Waiting at Legnano, some 17 miles northwest of Milan, they rallied their

army around a *carroccio*—a large mobile battle wagon. Surrounding it were successive ranks of 2,000 polearm-wielding infantrymen; rounding out the force were 1,500 knights.

Frederick scattered a 700-strong detachment of Lombard cavalry, then struck the main enemy force. Barbarossa's mounted knights hacked their way through the outer Lombard ranks. But defending the *carroccio* itself was the “Company of Death,” a Milanese force of 300 infantrymen. The soldiers proved a hard nut to crack, and while Frederick obsessed over their defeat, the Lombard cavalry re-entered the fray, aided by reinforcements from Brescia.

In the melee that followed, the emperor's bodyguards and standard bearer were slain, while the emperor himself was unhorsed. His disappearance panicked his troops, prompting a rout. Frederick's wife, Beatrice I, was under the impression her husband had died until he showed up days later at Pavia. At the nadir of his rule, Frederick had no option but to enter into the Peace of Venice with the papacy and the Lombard League. In 1186 in Milan his son Henry VI married Constance of Sicily to cement the new alliance.

Lessons:

Check your ambition. Frederick's desire to match Charlemagne's achievements was out of touch with the changed geopolitical realities.

In unity, strength. The fractious Italian city-states discovered a path to success that had eluded them. It would not last.

Pragmatism in defeat. Bribery helped foment division within the league, enabling Frederick to mitigate his settlement. **MH**

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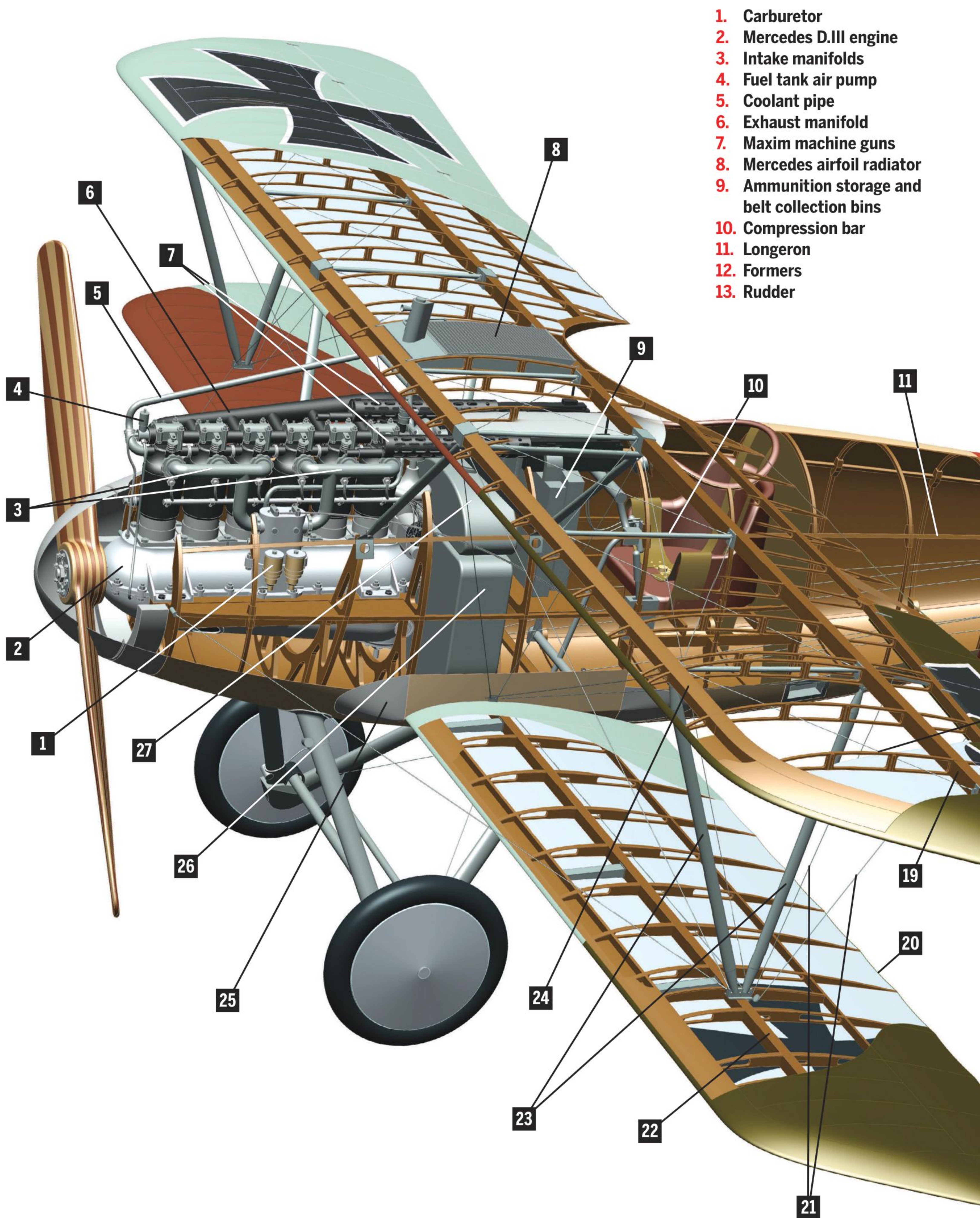
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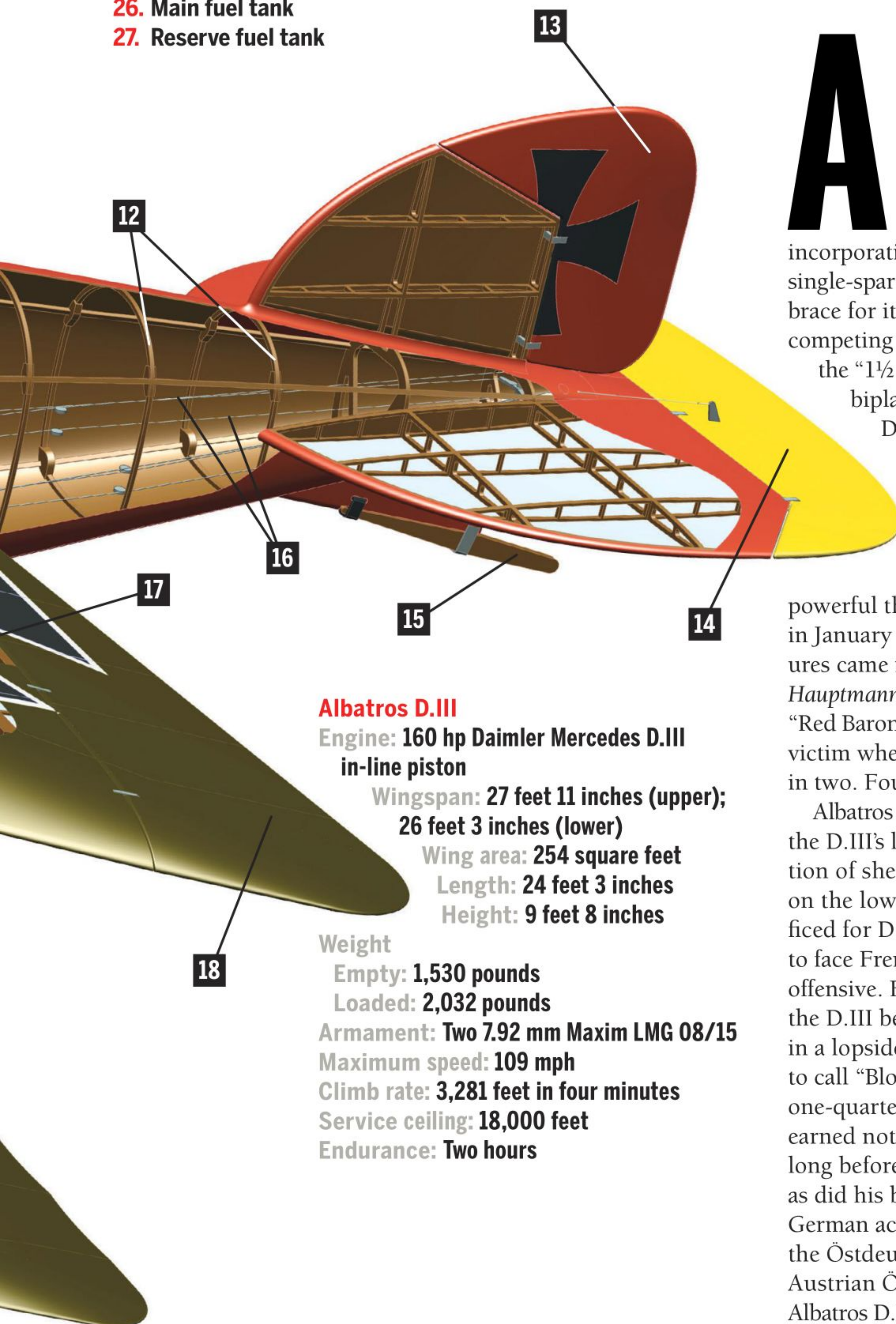
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14. Elevator
15. Tail skid
16. Control cables
17. Wing rib
18. Aileron
19. Aft spar
20. Wing trailing edge wire
21. Aileron control cable
22. Lower wing spar
23. Interplane V-strut
24. Forward spar
25. Wing root fairing
26. Main fuel tank
27. Reserve fuel tank



Albatros D.III

Engine: 160 hp Daimler Mercedes D.III in-line piston

Wingspan: 27 feet 11 inches (upper); 26 feet 3 inches (lower)

Wing area: 254 square feet

Length: 24 feet 3 inches

Height: 9 feet 8 inches

Weight

Empty: 1,530 pounds

Loaded: 2,032 pounds

Armament: Two 7.92 mm Maxim LMG 08/15

Maximum speed: 109 mph

Climb rate: 3,281 feet in four minutes

Service ceiling: 18,000 feet

Endurance: Two hours

Hardware

Albatros D.III

By Jon Guttman

Illustration by Henry Morshead

Amid the escalating quest for air superiority over the Western Front, in June 1916 the German high command, impressed with the agility and excellent downward visibility afforded by the Nieuport 17 sesquiplane, ordered a single-seat fighter incorporating that French counterpart's narrow, single-spar lower wing—little more than an airfoil brace for its two-spar upper wing. Among other competing manufacturers, Albatros tried applying the “1½ wing” arrangement to its successful D.II biplane, and in December the first Albatros D.IIIs reached *Jagdstaffel* (or *Jasta*) 24.

In addition to its superior downward view, the D.III boasted a better climb rate and maneuverability than the D.II. However, the Albatros was also heavier and more powerful than the rotary engine Nieuport, and in January 1917 reports of structural wing failures came in from German pilots. On the 23rd *Hauptmann* Manfred von Richthofen, the famed “Red Baron,” was forced to set down near his 17th victim when one of his lower wings nearly broke in two. Four days later all D.IIIs were grounded.

Albatros responded by strengthening and bracing the D.III's lower wing cellule, including the addition of sheet metal braces to the front stringers on the lower wing. The stopgap measures sufficed for D.III deliveries to resume just in time to face French Gen. Robert Nivelle's spring 1917 offensive. Flown aggressively with tactical skill, the D.III became the terror of the Western Front in a lopsided 4-to-1 slaughter the British came to call “Bloody April.” Richthofen himself scored one-quarter of his 80 victories that month and earned notoriety for his all-red Albatros D.III long before he laid eyes on a Fokker triplane—as did his brother Lothar and numerous other German aces. Built by Albatros and its subsidiary, the *Östdeutsche Albatros Werke*, as well as the Austrian *Österreichische Flugzeugfabrik AG*, Albatros D.IIIs served throughout World War I. **MH**



GAUL OR BUST

The stakes were never higher
for Julius Caesar than in battle
on the Sabis River in 57 BC

By Benjamin J. Nagy



In this 1832 oil on canvas by French painter François Gérard a lone Gallic warrior takes on a group of spear-wielding Romans.

We remember Gaius Julius Caesar from our schoolbooks for his conquest of Gaul, his consolidation of power over the Roman Senate and, ultimately, his betrayal and brutal murder at the hands of fellow Romans. Yet few are familiar with the Gallic wars Battle of the Sabis River, in which Caesar very nearly lost his army, his political ambitions and his life. Indeed, only his legionaries' experience, training and individual initiative saved him from utter annihilation.

In 57 BC, his second year of campaigning in Gaul (centered on present-day France, Belgium and Luxembourg), Caesar focused on suppressing the northern tribes, either through diplomacy or by the sword. His legions had defeated the Helvetii confederation of Gallic tribes the previous year, and the general was determined to destroy any remaining rebel factions. That summer he faced his greatest obstacle in a tribal coalition led by the Belgic Nervii people, who refused to submit to Roman rule.

The leader of the Nervii, Boduognatus, had formed a Belgae/Gallic alliance of four tribes: Boduognatus' own Nervii, the Atrebates, the Aduatuci and the Viromandui. The Aduatuci would not arrive in time to participate in the battle Boduognatus hoped would thwart the Roman advance, but the Nervii leader was still able to mass upward of 60,000 warriors, by Caesar's estimate. Modern demographic analysis suggests half that number.

Boduognatus' battle plan—to lay in ambush, then launch all-out assaults on individual legions, defeating Caesar's army in detail—was tactically sound. The plan relied on the Roman convention of placing a baggage train between each legion while on the march. Such gaps in the column would allow the tribesmen time and space to annihilate the legions in sequence, before each trailing legion was able to maneuver around the preceding baggage train. The difficult, hilly terrain Boduognatus selected would grant his men the advantage of concealment, while the surrounding woods would restrict the legions' mobility. If the tribesmen could seize the initiative and strike hard, they should be able to overwhelm the Roman troops. Boduognatus further hoped the legions' systematic, piecemeal destruction and the sacking of the baggage trains would in turn send the famously disciplined legionaries into a panicked rout, forcing Caesar to withdraw to winter quarters. While his theory was sound, Boduognatus faced a formidable foe.

The Roman army comprised eight legions—the veteran VII, VIII, IX, X, XI and XII, plus the newly levied XIII and XIV—an estimated 42,000 men, roughly comparable to the Belgae/Gallic force. Caesar led his legions out of camp in mid-August. They marched down a narrow



Except for the men of the newly levied XIII and XIV legions, Caesar's troops were well-trained, battle-hardened and immensely capable.

road preceded by a reconnaissance element tasked with finding Boduognatus' forces. After three days' march the scouts pinpointed the Nervii and their allies not 10 miles distant, on the far side of the Sabis River (the present-day Selle River in northern France, a dozen miles from the

Caesar focused on suppressing the northern tribes, through diplomacy or by the sword

Belgian border). Caesar sent forward a reconnoitering party to select a suitable campsite.

Over the preceding days a number of ostensible Belgae/Gallic allies marching with the legions had melted away. This mass desertion created new concerns for Caesar. The defectors not only added valuable manpower to the



enemy but also provided Boduognatus intelligence on the composition, strength and disposition of the Roman column. With the departure of the Gallic allies—predominately cavalry—the Romans also lost a greater part of their ability to gather tactical intelligence and screen

Boduognatus had lost the element of surprise. But he had more surprises in store

the army's movements. As they approached the waiting enemy, Caesar adjusted his formation to minimize the impact of that loss, keeping the remaining cavalry close to the marching legions to protect against ambushes and changing the standard marching order. On learning from more trustworthy informants that Boduognatus' forces lay in wait before him, the Roman commander placed

his six veteran legions out front and consolidated the baggage trains into a single column, with the two green legions serving as a rearguard.

Boduognatus had lost the element of surprise. But he had more surprises in store for the Romans.

Caesar's army slowly filtered into the selected campsite atop a hill overlooking the Sabis, the terrain, foliage, trees and hedgerows restricting any wide-scale maneuvering. As each legion arrived, its commander sent out skirmishers to scout the surrounding woods, while quartering parties dispersed to gather wood and other necessities. Those remaining in camp dug trenches. Unknown to the Romans, the Nervii and their allies lay immediately south of the river, waiting for the baggage train to arrive before springing their concentrated ambush.

No sooner did the Roman scouts cross the Sabis than they made contact what they presumed to be a small band of mounted Nervii. In fact, the scouts had triggered Boduognatus' own screening force. Using the woods for cover



Opposite: Gallic warriors repulse Roman troops in this fanciful 1894 work. A more realistic painting from the 1870s depicts a cavalry clash between Romans and Gauls.

and concealment, the Nervii horsemen launched hit-and-run attacks—charging into and breaking up the Roman formations, only to retreat rapidly back into the woods. The clash between opposing skirmishers continued in this general pattern, the Romans reorganizing only to have the Nervii cavalry charge yet again. Far from incidental, the Nervii tactics worked to prevent discovery of the main Belgae/Gallic army, which awaited the signal to attack.

That signal finally came as Caesar's consolidated baggage train arrived at the unfinished Roman camp. Moments later tens of thousands of screaming tribesmen surged from the broken terrain, shattered Caesar's recon screen, splashed across the shallow river and charged headlong uphill toward the unprepared legionaries. The chaos Boduognatus had predicted spread though camp as the enemy rushed into their midst. Junior Roman commanders established hasty defenses wherever they stood. Legionaries—helmetless and half dressed for battle—engaged in hand-to-hand combat, while others fought unarmored in their marching kit. Unit commanders ral-

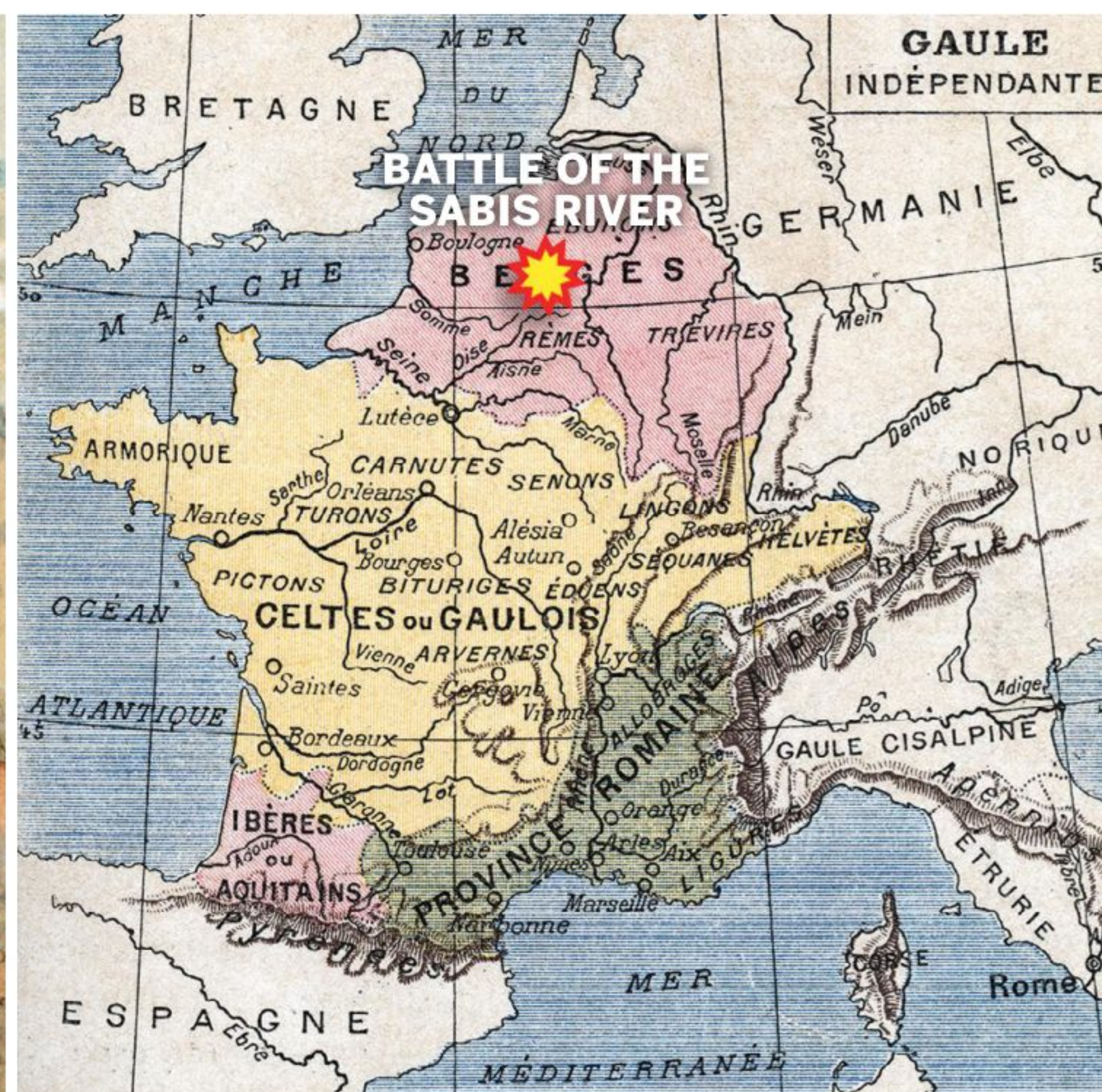
lied troops around their standards, organizing available troops into ad hoc battle formations. Legionaries from different units flocked to the closest standard or commander, joining to form ersatz combat units in response to the mortal danger. Annihilation stared the Romans in the face.

Given the restrictions imposed on him by the terrain and vegetation, Caesar was unable to exercise any real command and control. He later admitted as much in his history of the Gallic wars. "As the enemy was so close and advancing so swiftly," he wrote, "the [officers] did not wait for further orders but on their own responsibility took the measures they thought proper." For the Romans this would not be a general's fight, one guided by a plan and a single master. Instead, field-grade officers—legates and centurions—took command, rallying, organizing and counterattacking



Won the Toss

Throughout his reign Julius Caesar had coins struck to commemorate his military and political victories. The reverse of this silver denarius, struck after the Battle of the Sabis River, depicts captured Gallic weapons.



Above: Defeated by the Romans at the Sabis River, Belgae/Gallic troops retreat before their enemy. Right: The region of Europe known as Gaul in the Roman era centered on present-day France, Belgium and Luxembourg.

on their own initiative. As a result, the massive melee soon morphed into three separate actions.

On the Roman left flank Legions IX and X engaged the Atrebates. As that tribe had traveled the greatest distance to close with the enemy, its members entered combat somewhat fatigued. Marching toward the back of the lead element, the two legions benefitted from more time to gird themselves and thus responded effectively to the onslaught. As the Atrebates drew within range, both legions unleashed barrages of *pila* (javelins). The punishing hail repelled the Atrebates, pushing them back against the Sabis. Titus Labienus, commanding Legion X, pursued the fleeing enemy, followed by Legion IX. Pinning the Atrebates on the near bank of the river, the Romans shattered their morale and sapped their remaining strength. The pursuit continued across the river with similar results.

Fighting in the Roman center was tougher. There Legions VIII and XI locked in hand-to-hand combat with the Viromandui. Unfortunately for the latter, the Atrebates' panic spread to the Viromandui ranks, which followed suit and fell back against the river.

Like their comrades on the left, the legionaries dashed forward in pursuit of the tribesmen. Their eagerness had the unintended consequence of exposing the flank of Legions VII and XII on the Roman right.

Boduognatus and the Nervii, having closed with the Romans, noticed the break within the enemy line and rushed forward. The attackers split into two formations, one moving against the Roman camp, the other against Legions VII and XII. The result was the most confused fighting in a day filled with chaos. The Roman cavalry and slingers of the shattered recon screen returned to find the enemy in their camp, supporting their belief all was lost and prompting them to again flee, this time for good. Pressing the attack, Boduognatus and his Nervii warriors began to encircle the surviving Roman defenders. Things became so desperate that Caesar himself dismounted and took up arms in an effort to inspire his soldiers.

With Legions VII and XII beginning to falter due to the losses of both soldiers and officers, and given the increasingly apparent risk of envelopment, Caesar ordered the two legions to pivot and fight back to back. The new formation allowed them to be mutually supportive, each securing the other's rear. With the possibility of attack from that sector mitigated, a sense of hope spread through the ranks of the surrounded legions. The Nervii continued to press the attack, but the overall Belgae/Gallic attack began to stall.

It was at that point the untested Legions XIII and XIV arrived on scene. Simultaneously, from the banks of the river Labienus recognized the plight of his beleaguered countrymen, reorganized Legion X and surged back uphill with a vengeance. The three converging legions cinched a noose around the Nervii. Though the tribesmen fought with a desperate courage, the Romans inexorably ground them down, slaughtering the enemy almost to a man. By day's end, despite Boduognatus' careful plans and timely execution, the tribal confederation he led was ultimately destroyed on the banks of the Sabis.



Wingless

Contrary to popular belief (and the painting atop this page), there is no archaeological evidence to suggest Gallic warriors wore winged helmets. Instead, they likely wore domed helmets with ear guards, though seldom covered in gold leaf like the one pictured above.



Dictated to scribes, Caesar's *The Conquest of Gaul* is predictably biased in favor of the author and his legions.

The only extant firsthand source on the battle is Caesar's *The Conquest of Gaul*, in which he presents himself in a predictably flattering light (e.g., "Caesar had everything to do at once"). That said, it is apparent Boduognatus' surprise attack haunted him. Likewise, Caesar inflates the number of likely enemy casualties, but readers get a clear sense he came razor close to losing the battle. And while Caesar's after-action reports typically included lists of Roman casualties, particularly when very low, he omits any reference here to Roman losses. He likely did so for political reasons, controlling the narrative so as not to lose support among the powers that be in Rome. Reading between the lines of his battle account, it's safe to assume Roman casualties were especially high among the embattled Legions VII and XII.

It also becomes clear Caesar's victory was a credit not to his own martial prowess, but to the initiative and decisive actions of individual field officers and the disciplined response of rank-and-file legionaries. The Roman army of the era was professional, well-equipped, well-trained and highly disciplined. That the legionaries were able to organize quickly into ad hoc centers of resistance

changed the momentum of the battle. Leaders capitalized on that instilled sense of cohesion, trusting that amid chaos each soldier would rally to a standard and fight together as one.

The Battle of the Sabis River stands as a textbook example of the importance of low-level leadership, individual discipline and overall professional training. Focusing on the smaller unit actions, one can plainly see the margin for victory rested on those three attributes. Were it not for that critical victory on the Sabis, there may not have been a siege of Alesia, an invasion of Britain, a second Roman civil war or even the celebrated Gaius Julius Caesar. **MH**

Major Benjamin Nagy is an Army infantry officer and the author of *Maniple to Cohort: An Examination of Military Innovation and Reform in the Roman Republic*. For further reading he recommends *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, by Tacitus; *Caesar: Life of a Colossus*, by Adrian Goldsworthy; and *The Conquest of Gaul*, by Julius Caesar.

Battle of the Sabis River

42,000

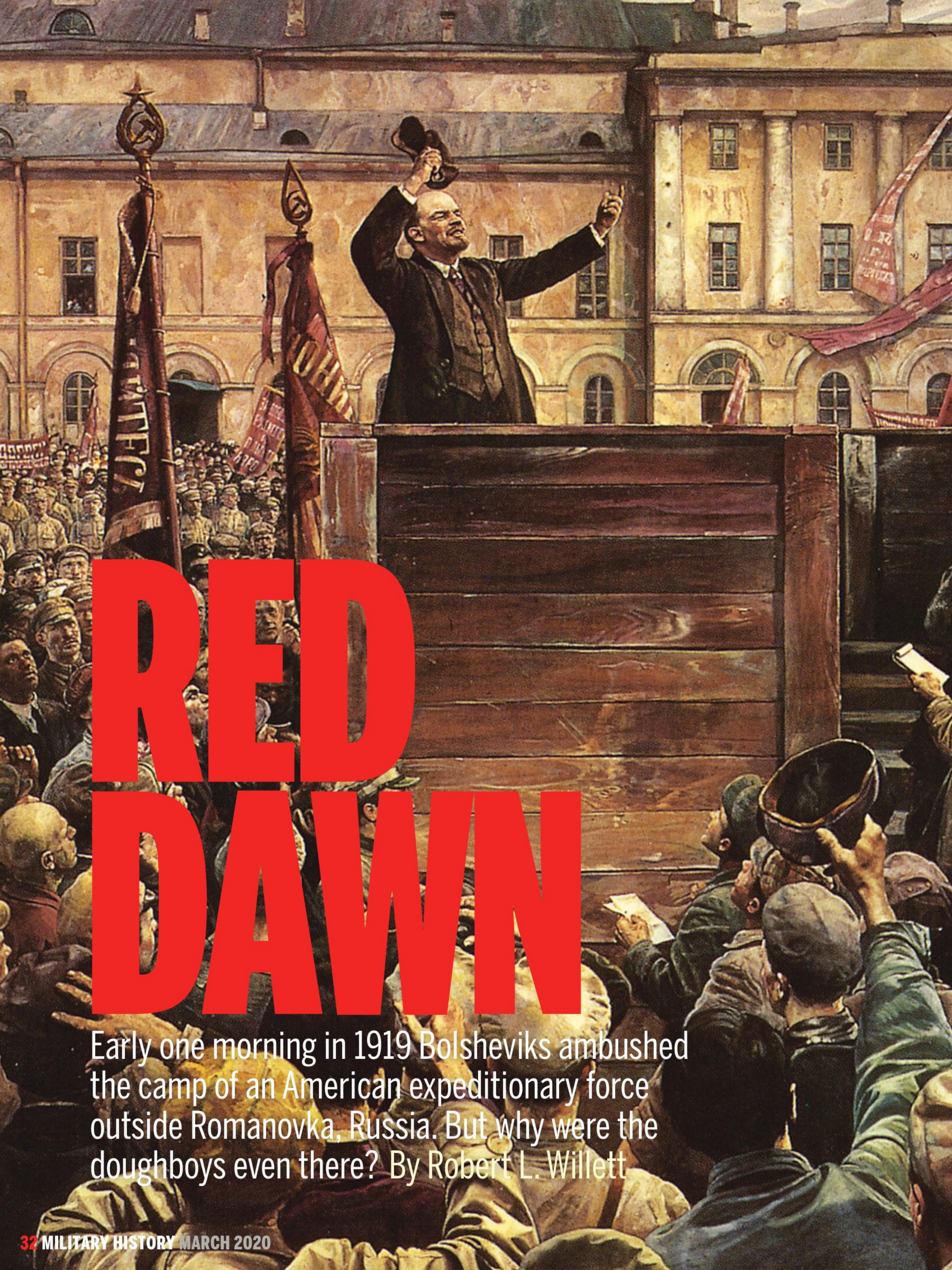
ROMAN TROOPS

(BASED ON EIGHT LEGIONS OF 4,800 MEN EACH, PLUS AUXILIARIES)
UNKNOWN NUMBER OF CASUALTIES

60,000

BELGAE/GALLIC TROOPS

(CAESAR'S ESTIMATE)
59,500 CASUALTIES
(ALSO ACCORDING TO CAESAR)



RED DAWN

Early one morning in 1919 Bolsheviks ambushed the camp of an American expeditionary force outside Romanovka, Russia. But why were the doughboys even there? By Robert L. Willett



The Bolshevik revolution—whose leader, Vladimir Lenin, is depicted here inciting a crowd—prompted the Allied intervention in Russia.



Jointly developed by Russian Sergei Mosin and Belgian Léon Nagant, the 7.62 mm M1891 rifle saw service in the Russian Civil War and both world wars.

At 6 o'clock on the evening of June 24, 1919, a train pulled into the small town of Romanovka, Russia. When the cars came to a halt, 33-year-old Lt. Col. Robert L. Eichelberger stepped lightly onto the station platform. The U.S. Army intelligence officer was en route from Vladivostok to Suchan (present-day Partizansk), a coal mining hub some 35 miles farther east as the crow flies. Eichelberger would later serve with distinction under General of the Army Douglas MacArthur in the Pacific theater of World War II. But on that warm, still evening seven months after the end of World War I he'd been sent to negotiate the release of five American soldiers taken captive while fishing along the Suchan River and to investigate why U.S. troops in the region had been suffering frequent attacks by Bolsheviks—the communist followers of Soviet Chairman Vladimir Lenin then engaged in a brutal civil war against monarchist supporters of the executed czar, Nicholas II.

Though Eichelberger found Romanovka generally quiet the evening of his visit, the next day it was the scene of a bloody fight some historians consider the last battle of World War I.

The Allies sent troops into Russia in the fall of 1918 to secure the thousands of tons of arms, munitions and other war materiel provided to imperial Russia before the communist revolution that deposed Nicholas in March 1917. Troops from a dozen nations—including the United States, France, Britain, Italy and Japan—occupied ports and other strategic facilities across the embattled country, primarily in the northern European region, the far eastern Pacific and Siberia. The 5,000 soldiers of the American North Russia Expeditionary Force (aka “Polar Bears”) were sent to help secure the port of Archangel, while the 8,000 men of the American Expeditionary Force, Siberia were dispatched to the port of Vladivostok, in the far east.

The American forces arrived in Russia 60 to 90 days before the signing of the armistice on Nov. 11, 1918. Though the Allies' reasons for being in Russia ostensibly disappeared when

the war ended, the subsequent failure of the moderate government of Alexander Kerensky and later seizure of power by Lenin and his radical Bolsheviks prompted the interventionist nations to maintain their in-country military presence. They also chose to abandon their professed neutrality and militarily support the anti-communist White Army forces in the civil war that engulfed Russia following Kerensky's downfall. That choice inevitably brought Allied troops into direct combat with Bolshevik Red Army regulars and partisans.

Among the units dispatched to Siberia was the 31st U.S. Infantry Regiment out of Fort William McKinley, just

outside Manila in the Philippines. On arrival in Russia the regiment's three battalions were tasked with securing Vladivostok, sections of the Trans-Siberian Railway and the branch line leading from Vladivostok to the vital coal mines in Suchan. The latter duty was the responsibility of the regiment's 1st Battalion, whose Company A was deployed in and around Romanovka.

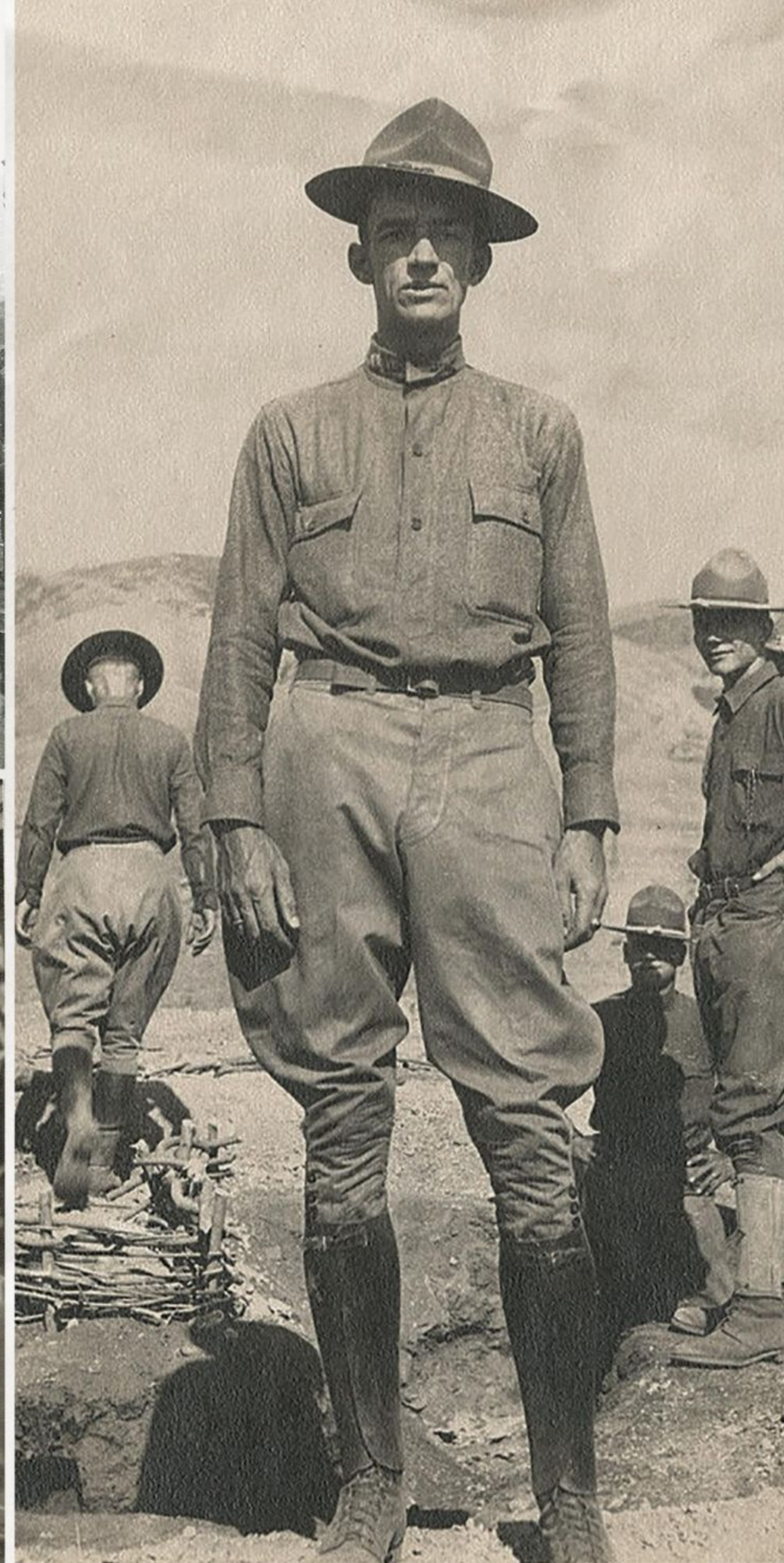
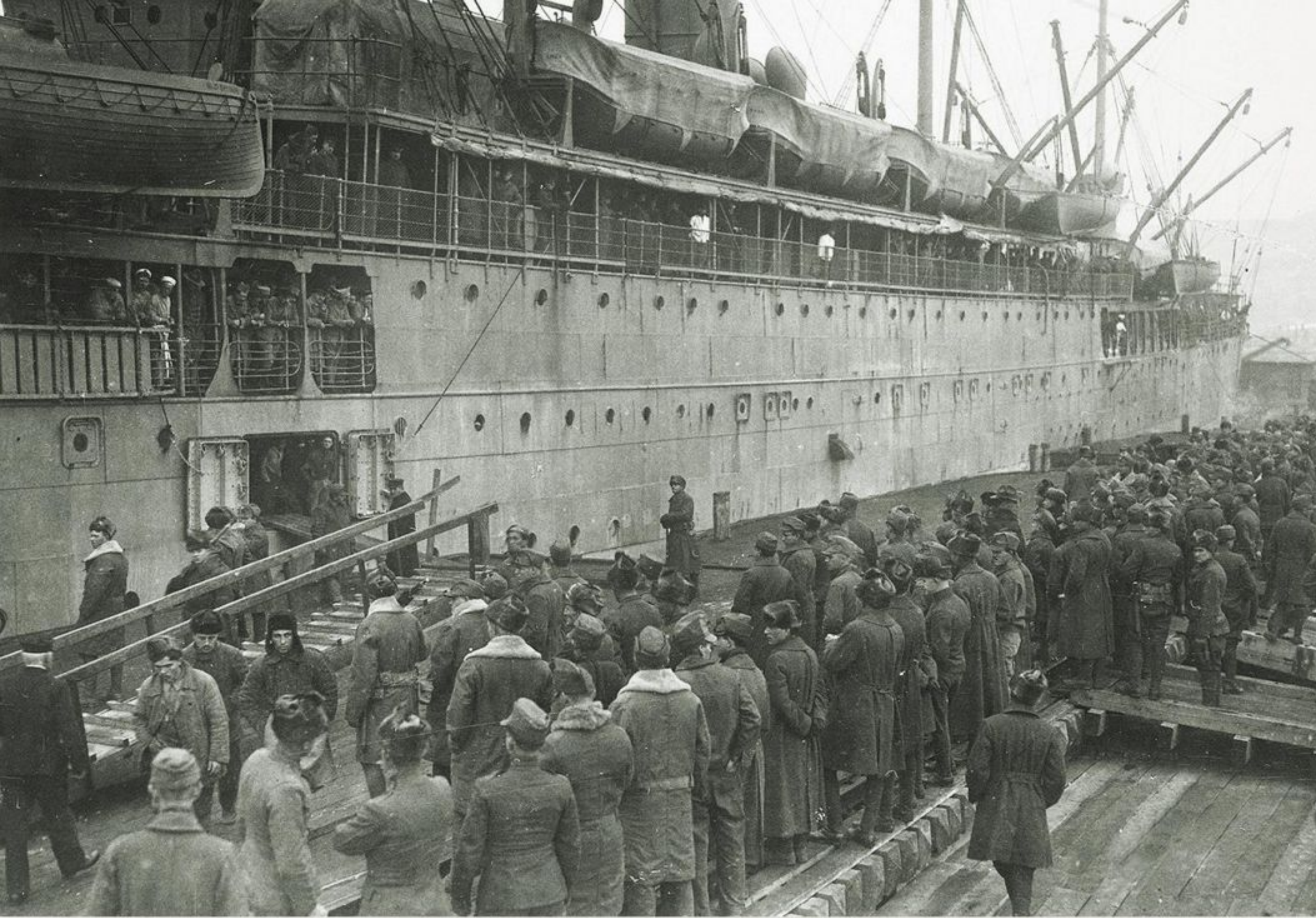
When Eichelberger and Maj. Sidney C. Graves, son of Siberian expedition commander Maj. Gen. William Sidney Graves, stopped in Romanovka that June 24, they were less than pleased with Company A's combat readiness. As Eichelberger wrote to wife Emma the next day:

When passing through Romanovka at 6 p.m., we found an American platoon with camp pitched on the village green (men bathing and playing baseball, etc.). We met a young West Pointer who was in command. Sidney remarked to me he should have some trenches constructed for use in case of attack.

The West Pointer was 21-year-old 2nd Lt. Harry Krieger, a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy's accelerated Class of 1918. But he would not retain command for long. Earlier on the 24th one of Company A's platoons had left Romanovka, bound for Company C's command post in Kangaus (present-day Anisimovka), 20 miles to the east. That left Krieger with 51 men of Company A's 3rd Platoon to guard the railroad and a nearby bridge. At dusk 27-year-old 2nd Lt. Lawrence D. Butler arrived with 21 reinforcements. As there had been friction between the people of Romanovka and Krieger, Butler was placed in charge of the combined American force.



Sergei Lazo



Despite the regional uptick in Bolshevik attacks, Romanovka appeared peaceful. The Yanks and villagers mingled on a daily basis and seemed to tolerate one another. There was even a romance blooming, as Sgt. Almus Beck of Company C had won the heart of a resident Polish nurse named Lillie who had lately served in the White Army. Beck had left with Company C on the morning of the 24th, while Lillie remained in town.

She would soon have reason to put her considerable nursing skills to work.

The Americans encamped in Romanovka may have felt relatively secure the night of June 24, but by dawn the following morning some 200 Red Army soldiers had massed along a bluff overlooking town. Led by a fiery Moldovan-born Bolshevik leader named Sergei Lazo, the Russians were bent on inflicting as many casualties as possible on the troops they viewed as foreign invaders.

Top left: American troops disembark from the transport that carried them to Russia. Above left: The Yanks parade through the streets of Vladivostok. Above: Intelligence officer Lt. Col. Robert Eichelberger.

The Reds launched their attack at 5 a.m. as the lone American sentry left his nighttime post, unrelieved, to come in for breakfast. Firing from the hilltop, the attackers raked the American tents with machine-gun and rifle fire, killing or wounding many men while they slept. Among those seriously injured was Butler. Shot through the jaw, bleeding badly and unable to speak, he still managed to organize the bewildered doughboys. Recognizing the peril his men faced if they remained in the open, he used hand gestures and hastily scrawled notes to direct the survivors toward a trio of log houses on the outskirts of town. (For his actions Butler would ultimately receive the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second-highest award for combat valor, behind the Medal of Honor.)



Eichelberger snapped this photo of White Russian soldiers—ostensible allies of the Americans—aboard a train near Romanovka.

That fall the International News Service distributed the lieutenant's summary account of the attack:

Most of the boys who were killed never had a chance to leave their beds.... They were shot while asleep. The others came scrambling out and fought in their under-

The Americans used BARs, rifles and grenades to keep the encroaching Bolsheviks at bay

clothing. I ordered them on to advance in skirmish order. They moved as though on the drill ground. A corporal, already wounded in the foot, led them. He walked, and the men followed....

My orderly was behind me, carrying my rifle. My pistol was empty, and I turned to him, asking for the rifle. As he handed it to me, his head was blown off.

I was wounded in the leg by an American bullet fired by a Russian.

A Russian ran to our ammunition tent. I put my head out of a window in a house where I had gone to pick a sharpshooter and received a bullet in the jaw. My teeth flew over the place like so many pellets.

Inspired by Butler's valor, heroes began to emerge. Covering the survivors' retreat across open ground were three sharpshooters—Pvts. Roy Jones and Emmet Lunsford, each armed with a Browning automatic rifle (BAR), and Pvt. George Strakey, with his fast-firing single-shot M1903 Springfield rifle. Though wounded, all three continued to expose themselves to fire for clear shots at the enemy. (Each would recover from his wounds and receive a Distinguished Service Cross.)

After gaining the protection of the log houses, the lieutenant called for volunteers to sprint back across open ground to the railroad tracks and follow them 6 miles east to summon help from Company E in Novonezhino. Corporals Leo Heinzman and Valeryan Brod-



AEF, Siberia

The first shoulder patch worn by the men of the 31st Infantry depicted a standing polar bear in blue. Superimposed atop it in white was the letter "S" for Siberia, intended to distinguish its troops from the "Polar Bears" assigned to the American Expeditionary Force, North Russia.

nicki responded, each taking a different path in the hope at least one would get through. All able-bodied men provided covering fire. Although Brodnicki was twice hit by Bolshevik bullets, both men made it to the tracks. Heinzman soon flagged down an inbound train from Novonezhino. Aboard it were Sgt. Sylvester Moore and a 17-man detachment from Company K. Realizing they were too few to make a difference, Moore had the engineer back the train to Novonezhino to alert Company E. The train stopped only to pick up the wounded Brodnicki. (He and Heinzman would later both receive the Distinguished Service Cross.)

In Novonezhino the pair waited as Lt. Lewis J. Lorimar organized a relief mission. When the train set out again, 77 soldiers were aboard—58 from Company E, the 17 from Company K and Butler's two courageous runners. Before dispatching the relief force, Lorimar also ordered a hospital train from Kangaus to come to the aid of the besieged men in Romanovka.

Meanwhile, from their barricaded stronghold within the log houses the Americans used BARs, rifles and grenades to keep the encroaching Bolsheviks at bay. Inside, however, several wounded and dying men needed immediate attention. The only medic in the detachment, Pvt. Herbert Naylor, had been grievously wounded early that morning and would die four days later in hospital. Fortunately, Sgt. Beck's flame, Lillie the Polish nurse, was there to help. While the sights, sounds and smells would have unnerved even an experienced combat nurse, she retrieved wounded from the field, staunching bleeding, bandaged wounds and comforted the dying with compassion and skill. In after-action reports the survivors also praised another village woman, who patched up the lightly wounded and helped where she could as her three wide-eyed children looked on.

The train carrying Lorimar's heavily armed relief force was the first to arrive in Romanovka, and it prompted the Bolsheviks to begin pulling out. The disembarking Americans were stunned by the carnage they found. The camp was a scene of devastation, and trails of blood led from the tents to the three barricaded log houses. "The ground was strewn with blood-soaked bodies of American soldiers," 2nd Lt. Sylvian Kindall recalled. "Splintered bones and flesh torn with ghastly holes told plainly that dum dum bullets had been used. Half of those hit were dead; others were dying or were too injured to rise from the ground."



Bolsheviks were not the only foe confronting American troops in Russia. That first winter the Yanks dealt with heavy snow and frigid temperatures, which gave way in summer to sweltering heat and oppressive humidity.

While the fighting was largely over, the withdrawing Reds did leave a few snipers to keep the Americans' heads down. That remained a concern once the hospital train arrived and disembarking medics began tending the wounded and gathering the dead. Capt. Oscar C. Frundt was in charge of the train. He triaged cases and supervised the loading of patients for the arduous trip back to Vladivostok, all while under fire. Once aboard he ensured their wounds were dressed and approved sulfate and morphine for the worst cases. He also took pains to ensure there was plenty of hot coffee and crackers on hand for those who could eat. (Frundt would also receive the Distinguished Service Cross.)

But the day's agonies were not over. A bridge between Romanovka and the main Trans-Siberian line to Vladivostok had been destroyed, so the injured and dead had to be transferred across a river gorge to another train. Frundt's staff removed the wounded from the hospital train on litters, carried them as gently as possible over a footbridge and loaded them onto a waiting Vladivostok-bound freight train—the wounded on two open boxcars, the dead on a third. During the onward journey the freight cars rattled and bumped all the way.

When the train pulled into Vladivostok at 7 p.m. that night, U.S. Army medical personnel from Evacuation Hospital No. 17 did their best to settle the patients and care for the dead. As Sgt. Sam Richardson recalled, hospital staff worked through the night administering medicine, tending wounds and embalming the dead. Richardson was

Battle of Romanovka

72

U.S. TROOPS

24

KILLED
21 WOUNDED

200

RUSSIAN TROOPS

41-57

KILLED OR
MISSING

Yanks vs. Reds in Siberia

The ostensible aim of the 1918–20 U.S. intervention in and around the far eastern Siberian port of Vladivostok was to secure war materiel the Allies had provided to Russia, given the latter's withdrawal from World War I. Once in country, however, Allied forces found themselves increasingly pulled into Russia's brewing civil war on the side of anti-communist White Army forces. That in turn prompted Red Army regulars and Bolshevik partisans to target the occupation troops.

Deployed from its headquarters in the Philippines, the U.S. 31st Infantry Regiment was tasked with securing Vladivostok itself as well as sections of the Trans-Siberian Railway and a branch line east to the vital coal mines in Suchan. Company A of the 31st set up a tent camp on the outskirts of Romanovka. The site proved far from secure. **MH**



Allied Intervention

When Russia erupted in civil war and withdrew its forces from World War I in 1918, a dozen Allied nations (spearheaded by France, the United States, Britain and Japan) sent troops into that fracturing empire to secure stockpiles of Allied-supplied arms, munitions and other materiel. Their goal was to keep the supplies out of the hands of both the Germans and communist rebels under Vladimir Lenin. Sent to occupy the port of Vladivostok and environs in the far east were U.S. troops of the American Expeditionary Force, Siberia.



Battle of Romanovka: Ambush at Dawn

In retrospect the site Company A of the 31st Infantry chose to place its tent camp was a poor one. Though it commanded the strategically important branch railway line between Vladivostok and the Suchan coal mining district, the camp also sat directly beneath a high bluff northeast of town.

At dawn on June 25, 1919, some 200 Red Army soldiers under Moldovan-born Bolshevik guerrilla Sergei Lazo exploited that weakness and ambushed the sleeping doughboys. They sprang their attack when the lone U.S. sentry atop the bluff returned to camp at reveille. Nineteen Americans were killed in the opening ambush.

Though suffering from a bullet-shattered jaw, 2nd Lt. Lawrence D. Butler organized a fighting withdrawal of his surviving men to a trio of log homes on the edge of town. He then sent Cpls. Leo Heinzman and Valeryan Brodnicki on a desperate dash east across open ground and down the rail line toward the U.S. camp in Novonezhino. Flagging down an inbound train, the duo appealed for reinforcements and soon returned with a 75-man relief force. Its appearance was enough to send the Bolsheviks packing. The attack had cost Lazo upward of 40 men killed.

In January 1920 U.S. troops began a withdrawal, and Siberia was soon a bad memory.



Eichelberger

Following his service in Siberia, the intel officer held increasingly senior staff positions. In 1940 he became superintendent of West Point, and after Pearl Harbor he served in the South Pacific and Philippines and with U.S. occupation forces in Japan. He retired in 1948.

tasked with compiling a casualty list to notify officials and next of kin back in the United States. His tally recorded 19 killed and 26 wounded, five of whom would die from their wounds. More than 60 percent of the Americans in camp that day had fallen as casualties.

The end of the Romanovka battle marked the beginning of a long road to recovery for the American wounded. After initial care at the evacuation hospital in Vladivostok, Butler and a dozen others were deemed fit to be moved. On August 4 they embarked on the USAT *Sherman*, bound for San Francisco. It was not a pleasant voyage. Soon after stopping to refuel in Manila, the ship ran into a typhoon. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported the consequences:

The transport lost her wireless plant in a typhoon four days out of Manila that...taxed the seaworthiness of the ship to the utmost. For 20 hours the wind maintained a velocity of 120 miles an hour. Nearly everyone on board was sick, and the troops in the hold of the vessel, where they were denied fresh air owing to the fact that the hatches everywhere had to be closed, suffered intensely but without complaint.

Adding to the misery aboard ship was an outbreak of cholera, necessitating a 16-day quarantine for those aboard when the vessel reached Nagasaki, Japan.

Sherman finally arrived in San Francisco on October 9, more than two months after having left Vladivostok. Butler and the other Romanovka wounded were taken to the Letterman Army Hospital at the Presidio, where the young lieutenant began a round of reconstructive surgeries. In the meantime, whenever he craved a smoke, a handkerchief tied atop his head and looped beneath his shattered jaw sufficed as a lower lip.

In January 1920 the 27th and 31st infantry regiments began a gradual withdrawal, recalling their far-flung units to the vicinity of Vladivostok. On April Fools' Day the last elements of the American Expeditionary Force, Siberia sailed from Vladivostok. While the value of the campaign has never been established, the final cost to Company A on June 25, 1919—24 dead and 21 wounded—seems a steep price to have paid for securing arms and materiel. Adding the estimated dozens of Bolshevik dead only magnifies the futility of the battle, the campaign and, in many ways, World War I itself. **MH**

Robert L. Willett is the author of three histories, including The Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War, 1918–1920. For further reading he also recommends When the United States Invaded Russia, by Carl J. Richard.

Tactical Takeaways

Avoid Civil Wars

Allied forces initially intervened in Russia to protect stockpiled arms and supplies but ended up handing the Reds a propaganda victory present-day Russia still exploits.

Remain Alert

The Reds sprang their ambush when the lone American sentry left his post unattended.

Courage Counts

Despite his grievous wounds, Lt. Lawrence Butler continued to lead from the front, organizing his initially bewildered troops and inspiring their defense.

Opposite: The AEF in Siberia operated dedicated hospital trains. Eichelberger and staff inspect a bridge on the Suchan branch line burned by the Bolsheviks.



In the decisive action of the 1777
Battle of Bennington American
militiamen overwhelm the German
redoubt and silence its cannons.





RISING ABOVE RANK

Overlooking a studied insult
by Congress, John Stark
rallied to the Patriot cause
at Bennington in 1777
By John Koster



Though passed over for promotion by Congress, New Hampshireman John Stark remained devoted to the Patriot cause.

Benedict Arnold and John Stark were among the greatest fighting men of the American Revolution, yet both were passed over by Congress for promotion when less worthy warriors received the ranks they sought. The rancor of the insult turned Benedict Arnold from the hero of Saratoga into the traitor who tried to sell West Point to the British. John Stark may have remained angry, but he never strayed from the Patriot cause. Indeed, he may have saved the members of the Second Continental Congress from traitors' deaths on the gallows had Britain won the war.

Stark, the second-born son of Scotch-Irish immigrants in New Hampshire, seems to have come into the world with a warrior spirit and a deep sense of clan loyalty. Hunting and trapping along the Baker River in the White Mountains in late April 1752 as a young man of 23, he was captured along with friend Amos Eastman by an Abenaki war party. Stark was able to warn older brother William, who escaped, but their friend David Stinson was killed. (Would-be rescuers later found his body stripped and scalped.)

When the Abenakis got Stark and Eastman back to their village in Quebec, they forced the two "Yengeese" to run the gauntlet between two lines of club-wielding warriors, each while holding a ceremonial pole adorned with the skin and feathers of a loon. Eastman held his pole aloft and endured the beating, falling exhausted at the far end. Stark followed. But as he made his way down the line, he kept his attackers largely at bay with wide sweeps of the pole. The bemused elders were so impressed they welcomed both young men into the tribe. Adopted into Abenaki families, they were taught the language and the Indian mode of warfare. Within weeks officials from the Province of Massachusetts Bay ransomed Stark and Eastman—for 103 Spanish dollars and 60 Spanish dollars, respectively—but John and his Abenaki family exchanged visits for years after the border fighting ended.

Stark's toughness and knowledge of Indians landed him stints as a British military scout, followed by commission as a second lieutenant in Rogers' Rangers, the famed reconnaissance and special operations unit raised in New Hampshire by Capt. Robert Rogers at the 1754 outset of the French and Indian War. Stark fought well and was promoted to captain. (Between engagements he even found time to marry local girl Elizabeth "Molly" Page.) But when told in 1759 the Rangers were to raid the Abenaki village at St. Francis, Quebec—the very home of his Indian foster family—he refused to join the expedition. Stark may have been prescient: The vaunted Rangers killed 30 Indians (two-thirds of whom were women and children, according to Indian sources), and on the return march Rogers lost nearly 50 men killed or captured by vengeful Abenakis. At the end of the campaign Stark returned to the quiet life of a New England farmer and sawmill operator.

When the American Revolutionary War broke out in earnest around Boston in 1775, Stark, according to his memoir, "mounted a horse and proceeded toward the theater of action." Appointed colonel of a militia regiment by fellow New Hampshiremen, Stark led the unit to Bunker Hill, where he helped defend the left flank of the Patriot line. His men repulsed three charges by the Royal Welch Fusiliers, handing huge losses to the Redcoats, who never took Stark's sector. The New Hampshiremen then covered their fellow Americans' retreat. In the wake of that action Gen. George Washington informally attached Stark's volunteers to the Continental Army. Returning stateside from an abortive invasion of Quebec, Stark fought in New Jersey at Trenton

in 1776—the battle that saved Washington's army—and at Princeton in the new year.

At the end of that campaign Stark again returned to New Hampshire, this time to recruit more men to the Patriot cause. In his absence Congress appointed Enoch Poor a brigadier general of Continentals. Stark had a low opinion of Poor, as the former New Hampshire assemblyman and junior colonel had refused to march to the support of the Massachusetts men at Bunker Hill. Taking Poor's promotion over his own head as a studied insult, Stark resigned his commission, effective March 22, 1777, though he stood ready to defend his native New Hampshire. His chance came later that year.

The British had devised a strategic plan to divide the rebellious New England colonies from the less antagonistic Middle Colonies, like heavily Dutch New Jersey and German pacifist Pennsylvania, by marching down from Canada and up from New York City to close the Hudson River to commerce and communication. The principal British and German mercenary army was that of Maj. Gen. John Burgoyne, a playwright and *bon vivant* who brought along his portable wine cellar and elegant mistress on campaign. Burgoyne's Germans—mostly Brunswickers—were led by Maj. Gen. Friedrich Adolf Riedesel, who thought his commander a poor disciplinarian. Yet Burgoyne managed to recapture Fort Ticonderoga on July 6 without a fight, earning a promo-



Snared Drum

Captured by American troops during the battle, this drum bears the date 1757 and what appear to be the initials "S.S." Its blue-painted sides are decorated with images of red-coated soldiers, suggesting it belonged to a British unit, as the Germans wore blue.



Imbued with a warrior spirit and extensive combat experience, Stark earned the respect and dedication of the troops he commanded.



False Flag?

It was long believed that American troops at the 1777 clash marched into battle beneath the “Bennington flag”—a relic depicted above. However, a 1996 technical evaluation of the banner revealed it is crafted of machine-woven cotton, which was not widely available in the United States until after 1800.

tion to lieutenant general. In the aftermath he instructed the Germans to drive off the abandoned cattle of “those acting in the service of the Rebels,” though he was merciful enough to spare the Patriot families their milk cows. But allied Indians under Riedesel’s nominal command cut the throats of the cattle to loot their bells. Few cattle reached the British camp.

The third and smallest prong of Burgoyne’s invasion broke down on August 6. Surprised in a bloody ambush, Brig. Gen. Nicholas Herkimer’s New York militiamen and allied Oneidas fought the attacking British and Mohawks under brevet Brig. Gen. Barry St. Leger to a grisly stalemate at Oriskany. While the Americans lost more than half their force—upward of 450 men killed, wounded or captured—St. Leger failed to take his objective, Fort Stanwix. Suspecting the war was a plot by whites to have Indians kill each other off, the Mohawks melted away.

Following the fight at Oriskany, Burgoyne let himself be talked into a march against a Patriot supply depot at Bennington in the New Hampshire Grants (present-day Vermont). His local Tory adviser, former British officer Philip Skene, convinced him that four out of five settler

families remained loyal to the Crown. In woeful retrospect Burgoyne later wrote of that folly:

The great bulk of the country is undoubtedly with the Congress, in principle and in zeal; and their measures are executed with a secrecy and dispatch that are not to be equaled. Wherever the king’s forces point, militia, to the amount of three or four thousand, assemble in 24 hours; they bring with them their subsistence, etc., and, the alarm over, they return to their farms. The Hampshire Grants in particular, a country unpeopled and almost unknown in the last war, now abounds in the most active and most rebellious race of the continent.

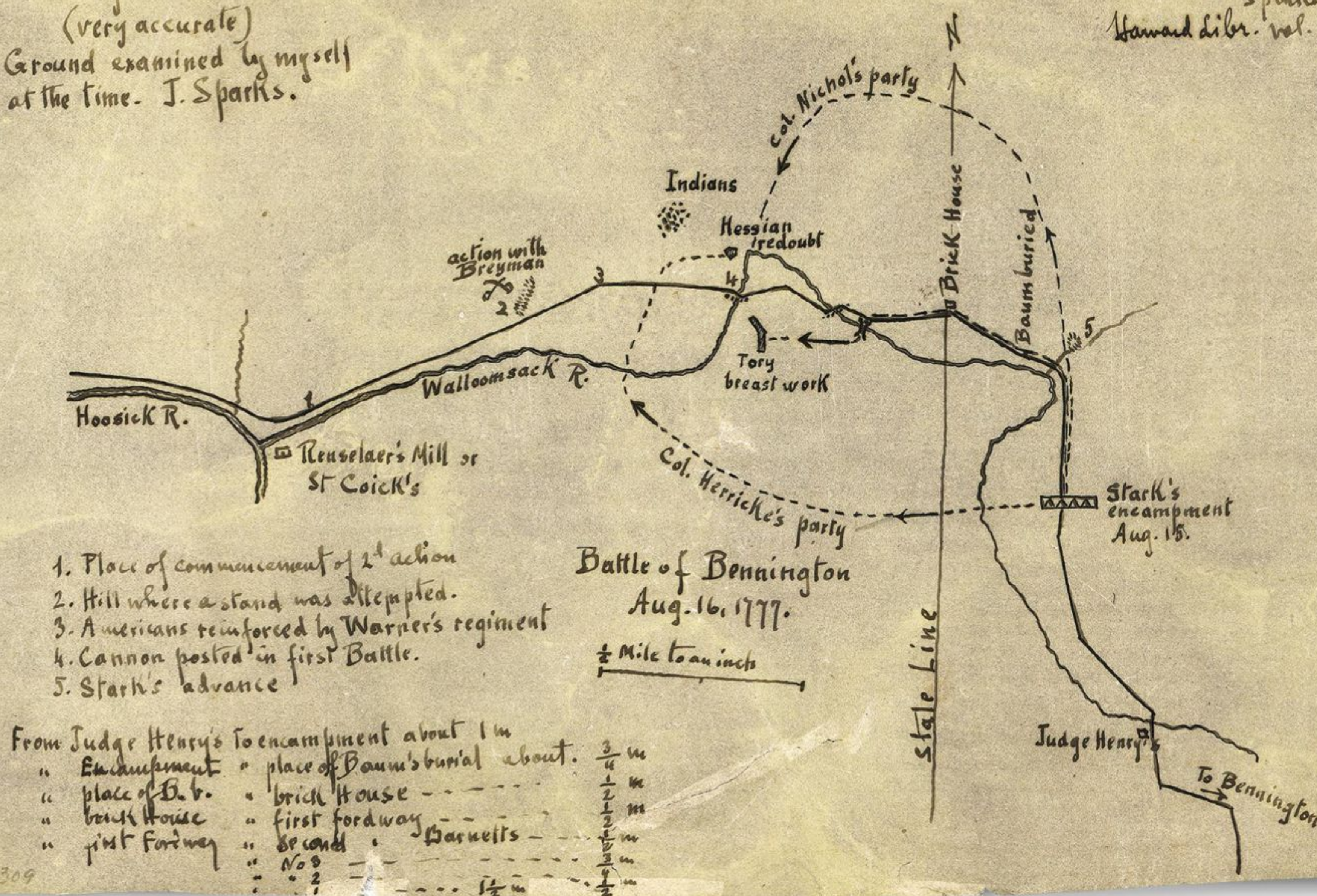
On August 11 Burgoyne sent out Lt. Col. Friedrich Baum, a Brunswicker who spoke no English, at the head a foraging party to collect cattle, horses, carts and wagons for the army. The Baum detachment comprised 434 German infantrymen and dismounted dragoons, 200 Tories, 60 Canadian Loyalists, 50 British marksmen and 14 artillerymen with two 3-pounder cannons. Sent ahead as scouts were some 150 dubious Indians, who only served to alarm the countryside.

The dragoons in their heavy boots clumped along for three days, giving the Americans plenty of time to concentrate their militia and send for reinforcements. On an invitation from provincial authorities, Stark had accepted a commission as brigadier general and assumed overall

Drawn by McHillard Hall
Bennington Oct 13, 1826
(very accurate)
Ground examined by myself
at the time. J. Sparks.

Map. 5

Trace a from
Sparks papers
Harvard Libr. vol. 28 - by J. D. Jr



command of the New Hampshire militia, which included regulars, short-term volunteers and draftees. The draft was not inexorable—those picked could hire a substitute without being defamed. Many were eager to serve under Stark. “I enlisted at Frankestown, N.H., as soon as I learned [he] would accept command of the state troops,” militiaman Thomas Mellon noted. “Six or seven others from the same town joined the army at the same time.”

On August 8, having mustered some 1,500 militiamen, Stark marched from Manchester to Bennington with Lt. Col. Seth Warner of Green Mountain Boys fame as his guide. “We heard that the Hessians were on their way to invade Vermont,” Mellon recalled. “Late in the afternoon of [a] rainy Friday we were ordered off for Bennington, in spite of rain, mud and darkness. We pushed on all night, each making the best progress he could.”

The rain and mud had also slowed Baum’s expedition. Plagued by Americans who had felled trees across the road to slow the baggage train and artillery, his mixed force never actually reached Bennington. On August 14 they fought with skirmishers from Stark’s forces, who withdrew, but not before destroying a bridge on the approach to the Walloomsac River. Baum’s Brunswickers and Tories fell back on high ground just inside New York and erected two makeshift redoubts of felled trees while awaiting reinforcements. Men on either side of the river struggled to keep their powder dry amid the continuing downpour.

The next morning Burgoyne dispatched Lt. Col. Heinrich von Breymann with 642 Brunswick grenadiers, who ran into similar difficulties with the muddy roads and felled trees. Stark had also sent for reinforcements. Among those answering the call were Massachusetts militiamen under the Rev. Thomas “Fighting Parson” Allen and Warner’s Green Mountain Boys, borderlands tax resisters who’d become rough-and-tumble militiamen. On the morning of August 16, emboldened by the presence of more than 2,000 fighting men under his command, Stark decided to stir the hornet’s nest across the river.

“Stark and Warner rode up near the enemy to reconnoiter, were fired at with the cannon and came galloping back,” Mellon wrote. “Stark rode with shoulders bent forward and cried out to his men: ‘Those rascals know that I am an officer; don’t you see they honor me with a big gun as a salute?’ We were marched round and round a circular hill till we were tired. Stark said it was to amuse the Germans. All the while a cannonade was kept on us from their breastwork. It hurt nobody, and it lessened our fear of the great guns.”

Stark had ordered the circular march in hopes of duping Baum into believing he had men enough to over-

Tactical Takeaways

Know Thine Enemy

Only in retrospect did Burgoyne concede the New Hampshire Grants were rife with Patriot sentiment.

Lead From the Front

Stark shared the same risks his countrymen took in battle, thus inspiring them to a level of commitment the Germans in British service did not share.

Know When to Fold

Arriving on the field of battle to the sight of Americans celebrating atop his own redoubts, Breymann regardless pressed the attack against 4-to-1 odds.



One of four cannons Stark's troops captured from the Germans, this gun fired a 3-pound ball and was later used against British forces in the War of 1812.

whelm the Brunswicker's trained troops. Afterward, Mellon and a dozen other militiamen were sent to ambush any local latecomers trying to join the Tories. They captured six such stragglers and sent them back to camp under guard. Around 3 p.m. they heard shots and watched the opening engagement from concealment.

"The Germans fired by platoons and were soon hidden by smoke," Mellon recalled. "Our men fired each on his own hook, aiming whenever they saw a flash. Few on

'Soon the Germans ran. Many of them threw down their guns on the ground or offered them to us'

our side had either bayonets or cartridges. At last I stole away from my post and ran down to the battle. The first time I fired, I put three balls into my gun."

"There, my boys, are your enemies!" Stark cried out, rallying his men to the attack. "They are ours, or this night Molly Stark sleeps a widow!" The precise wording remains in dispute, but the effect was galvanizing.

"We pressed forward," militiaman Jesse Field recalled, "and as the Hessians rose above their works, we discharged our pieces at them. We kept advancing, and

about the second fire they left their works and ran down the hill to the south or southeast. We followed on over their works and pursued them down the hill." Baum's feckless Indians beat a hasty retreat, their purloined cowbells jangling into the distance.

The first man to vault Baum's redoubt was Samuel Safford Jr.—all of 16 years old—whose father was the second-in-command of the Green Mountain Boys and who also had three uncles in the fight that day. Close on Safford's heels was John Meriam Jr., 20, who took several musket balls through his clothes.

Joseph Rudd, 37, aimed his musket at a stoutly built German, but the weapon misfired. As the German raised his own musket to fire, Rudd knocked the muzzle aside, and the two men grappled. When Rudd managed to draw the German's sword, the panicked man broke and ran. He didn't get far. Another American clubbed him dead with a musket butt. Rudd regretted the outcome, as he'd wanted a prisoner, not a corpse.

"After we passed the redoubt, there was no organized battle," Field recalled. "All was confusion. A party of our men would attack and kill or take prisoners another party of Hessians.... The pursuit was continued until they were all or nearly all killed or taken."

With the German redoubt subdued, the Americans under Warner turned to the Tory redoubt. Massachusetts militia

Battle of Bennington

2,350

U.S. TROOPS
2,000 STARK, 350 WARNER

30

KILLED
40 WOUNDED

1,550

BRITISH TROOPS
908 BAUM, 642 BREYMANN

207

KILLED
700 CAPTURED

Col. Joab Stafford noticed a slender old man with white hair in the ranks and asked him to stand sentinel rather than take part in the assault.

“The old man stepped forward with an unexpected spring,” Stafford’s son recalled. “His face was lighted with a smile, and, pulling off his hat in the excitement of his spirit, half affecting the gaiety of a youth, whilst his loose hair shone as white as silver, he briskly replied, ‘Not until I’ve had a shot at them first, Captain, if you please.’”

Inspired by the old man’s gallantry, Stafford personally led his men down a ravine toward the enemy redoubt. To his shock, the ravine emerged within spitting distance of the Tories, one of

whom got off a quick shot, hitting Stafford in the foot and dropping him to the ground. Fearing his fall might take the fight out of his men, the wounded colonel sprang to his feet and charged the redoubt. “Clambering to the top of the fort while the enemy were hurrying their powder into the pans and the muzzles of their pieces,” Stafford’s son said, “his men rushed on, shouting and firing, and jumping over the breastworks, and pushing upon the defenders so closely that they threw themselves over the opposite wall and ran down the hill as fast as their legs would carry them.”

Breymann arrived within the hour to find the victorious Americans atop the redoubts, stacking the captured arms and rifling through the supplies. Though Baum had been mortally wounded and the Brunswickers and Tories thoroughly routed, Breymann pressed the attack.

“I have always thought the second to be much the longest and hardest fought action,” Field recalled of the renewed battle. Outnumbered about 4-to-1, the Brunswickers under Breymann felt the pressure.

“Soon the Germans ran,” Mellon recalled. “Many of them threw down their guns on the ground or offered them to us or kneeled, some in puddles of water. One said to me ‘Wir sind ein, Bruder’ [‘We are one, brother’].” The Brunswicker drummers beat a cadence indicating they sought a parley, but Mellon said the Americans didn’t understand. Stark finally called off the pursuit as darkness set in. By then Breymann had been shot in the leg and lost a third of his command dead or wounded. (Faced with another humiliating defeat atop Bemis Heights at Saratoga that October, Breymann resorted to sabering his reluctant men, one of whom shot the obstinate colonel.)

Over five hours of stiff fighting Patriot militiamen had killed 207 enemy soldiers and captured another 700 (including 30 officers) for the loss of about 30 killed and 40 wounded. They’d also seized four cannons and a heap of arms and supplies. The enemy survivors limped back to Burgoyne with news of the catastrophic defeat.

After serving honorably through war’s end and attaining the rank of major general in the Continental Army, John Stark, the hero of Bennington, slipped back into retirement as a simple farmer. Had Benedict Arnold done likewise after securing another upset victory with his headstrong courage at Saratoga, both he and Stark would be remembered as American heroes. **MH**

John Koster is the author of Hermann Ehrhardt and Operation Snow. For further reading he recommends Memoir and Official Correspondence of Gen. John Stark, as well as The Battle of Bennington, by Michael P. Gabriel, and Battles of the American Revolution, by Curt Johnson.



A statue on the grounds of the New Hampshire State Capitol in Concord honors native son John Stark.





THE LITTLE AIRCRAFT THAT COULD

In mid-November 1940 two waves of obsolete British biplanes mounted history's first all-aerial ship-to-ship naval attack—with surprising results
By Michael W. Robbins



On the evening of Nov. 11, 1940, a small fleet of British warships detached from a much larger task force operating in the western Mediterranean and steamed north into the Ionian Sea toward Salento, the bootheel of Italy. The fleet comprised four cruisers, four destroyers and the newly commissioned aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious*. Its mission, code-named Operation Judgment, was a presumptuous one: to attack the main Italian fleet, the *Regia Marina*, in its storied home port of Taranto. At night.

In his memoir *War in a Stringbag* Royal Air Force Lt. Charles Lamb, who piloted a Fairey Swordfish torpedo bomber during the strike, recalled the approach to the Italian port:

For the last 15 minutes of our passage across the Ionian Sea [we] had no navigational problems, for Taranto could be seen from a distance of 50 miles or more because of the welcome awaiting us. The sky over the harbor looked as it sometimes does over Mount Etna, in Sicily, when the great volcano erupts. The darkness was being torn apart by a firework display which spat flame into the night to a height of nearly 5,000 feet.

"I think our hosts are expecting us," I said.

The matchup between British attackers and Italian defenders seemed almost laughably lopsided. This would not be a ship-to-ship slugfest à la Jutland; the *Regia Marina* was more than four times the size of the small British fleet. Instead, the attackers would strike by air, in 21 slow and manifestly obsolete carrier aircraft bearing torpedoes and bombs.

The fleet in their sights comprised six battleships, nine cruisers, more than two dozen destroyers and numerous other vessels at anchor in one of the world's best-protected harbors, with submerged breakwaters, submarine nets, barrage balloons dangling steel cables and hundreds of antiaircraft guns. The

British might accurately have named its mission Operation David vs. Goliath.

As it turned out, the Italians might well have dubbed it Operation Sitting Duck.

The British had learned much about naval aviation during the 1930s, and their latest carriers, the *Illustrious* class, were more than just credible. They were purpose-built, not converted cruisers or freighters with grafted-on flight decks. At 740 feet long, they offered ample space to both launch and recover combat aircraft. Their three steam turbines could propel the ships at speeds up to

30 knots. They boasted a range approaching 11,000 nautical miles. The carriers featured early-warning radar, multiple antiaircraft batteries and, most important, an armored flight deck. Each could carry 36 combat aircraft.

The Royal Navy's carrier aircraft of choice in 1940 was the Swordfish, a single-engine torpedo/dive bomber. Introduced in 1936, it was an open-cockpit biplane with fixed landing gear. It looked like an antique and by the outbreak of World War II was already considered obsolete, especially when compared to most other Axis and Allied fighters, bombers and torpedo planes.

The Swordfish—or "Stringbag," as it was nicknamed (a reference to string shopping bags common at the time in Britain), for the variety of items it could carry—had a theoretical top speed north of 140 mph, though many of the Royal Navy aviators who flew it noted the plane rarely topped 100. It was fabric-skinned, thus the crewmen's flight suits offered the only weather protection. The aircraft carried no navigational gear beyond a compass, an airspeed indicator, a simple radio and an observer's wristwatch. Its fixed armament consisted of two World War I-vintage .303-caliber machine guns.

Obsolete, yes. But it was Britain's best operational carrier plane, and it offered some important advantages. Each Swordfish could carry and launch a single Whitehead Mark XII, a proven torpedo weighing just over 1,600 pounds. With a range of 1,500 yards at a speed of 40 knots, the torpedo delivered a warhead packed with 388 pounds of TNT—sufficient to blow a hole the size of a double-decker bus through the plating of a modern armored battleship. Alternatively, the aircraft could carry 1,500 pounds of bombs or a mix of bombs and flares.

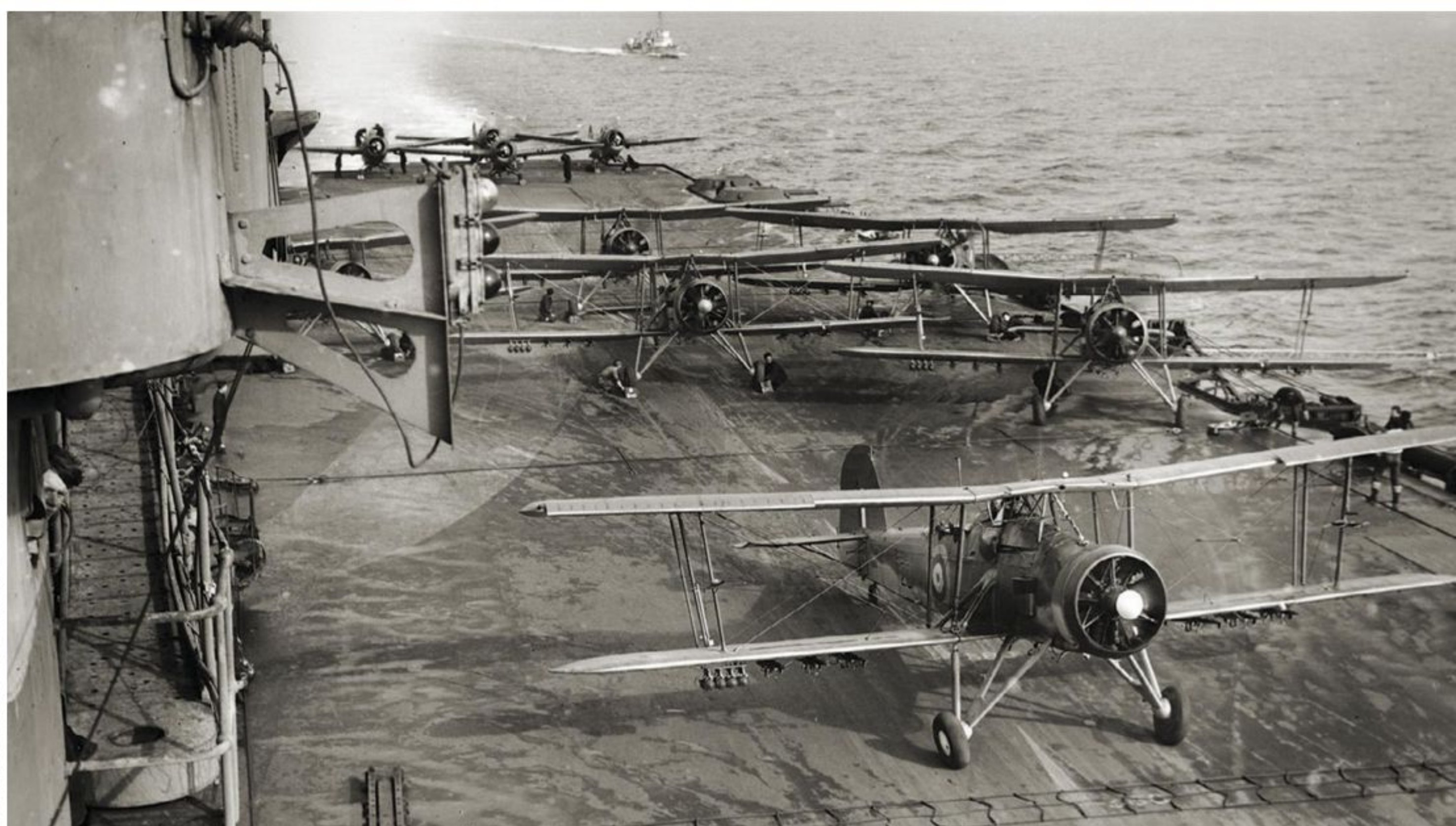
The Swordfish had other pluses. It was easy to fly, forgiving (proving difficult to stall) and stout enough to withstand a 200 mph dive and remain controllable. It could also take a lot of punishment—even to its 690 hp Bristol Pegasus nine-cylinder radial engine—and remain airborne. Perhaps most important, the Swordfish could be launched and recovered after dark, while the Italians had no operational night fighters anywhere near Taranto.

Aside from cutting-edge carriers and capable strike aircraft, the British fleet claimed other key strategic and tactical advantages over its Italian adversaries.

On the defensive front was shipborne radar. By 1940 more than a dozen warships in the British Mediterranean Fleet, including *Illustrious*, were radar-equipped, providing early warning of approaching enemy aircraft. Boosting the fleet's sense of security was the newly introduced Fairey Fulmar, the mainstay of *Illustrious*' combat air patrols. A fast two-seat fighter and dive-bomber, it bore the same eight-gun firepower of a Hawker Hurricane and proved more than a match for any potential *Regia Aeronautica* attackers.



Taranto was home port of the *Regia Marina*'s main fleet, including battleships, cruisers and destroyers.



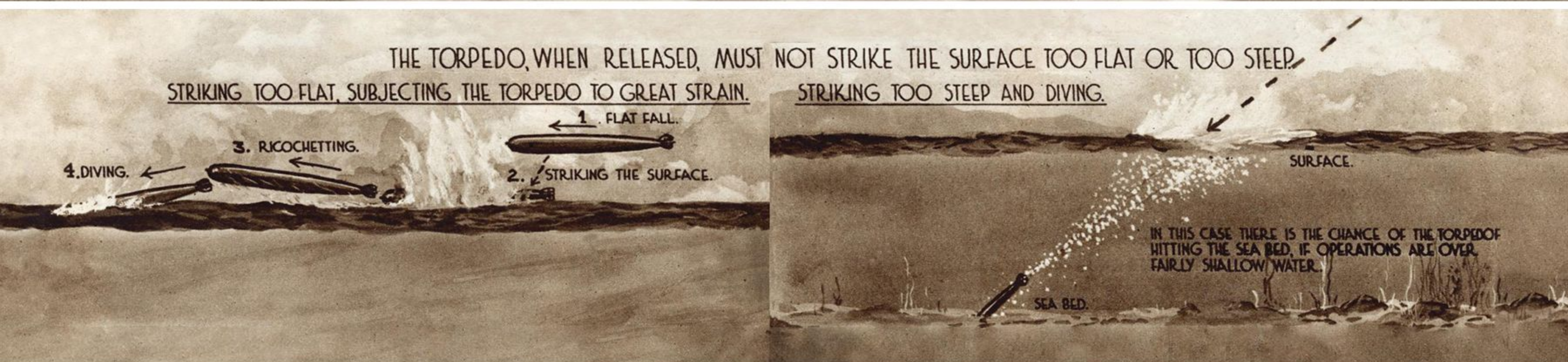
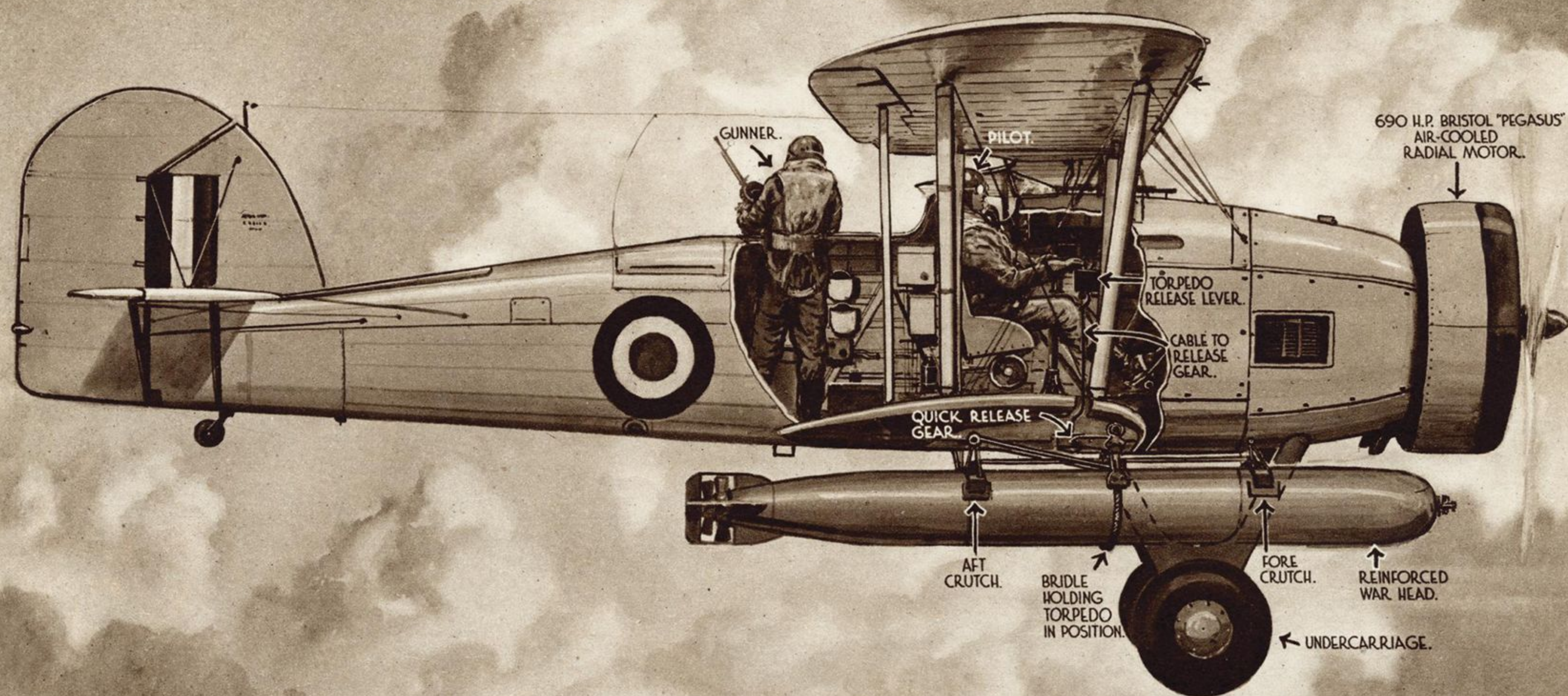
The British also had planning on their side. As early as 1935, when Italy invaded Ethiopia in a bid for control of the Mediterranean, Adm. Sir William Fisher, then commander of the British Mediterranean Fleet, realized his service someday might have to attack the *Regia Marina*'s home base and worked out the details of an aerial torpedo assault. Fisher's successor, Adm. Sir Dudley Pound, made refinements and began training for that eventuality. The Royal Navy shelved the plan until 1938, when war clouds began gathering over Europe. At that point Pound's successor, Adm. Sir Andrew Cunningham, a resourceful and determined commander, reopened the plan and undertook extensive exercises, including prac-

Above left: The first British aircraft carrier to feature an armored flight deck, *Illustrious* was launched in 1939 and commissioned a year later. Above: Dubbed the "Stringbag" for the variety of items it could carry, the Fairey Swordfish was already obsolete by the outset of World War II.

tice night launches, attacks and recoveries. Among the beneficiaries of those exercises were the very flight crews that through the summer and fall of 1940 trained for the scheduled Taranto raid. By that November they were virtual veterans of the operation.

Finally, Britain approached the raid with excellent intelligence, including extended surveillance of the Taranto harbor. In the months preceding the raid, British recon-

A BRITISH "SWORDFISH" TORPEDO-PLANE OF THE FLEET AIR ARM.



Il Tricolore

The national banner of the Kingdom of Italy from 1861 to 1946, the flag above also served as the stern ensign of *Regia Marina* vessels. From a short staff on its bow each ship also flew a smaller jack centered on the white cross, red field and blue border.

naissance aircraft, mostly ponderous four-engine Short Sunderland flying boats, undertook many risky overflights of Taranto to determine the types, numbers and locations of the Italian capital ships. That reconnaissance took a great leap forward with the arrival in Malta of three new American-built Martin Maryland Mk.IIs, twin-engine light bombers with a cruising speed of 250 mph and a ceiling approaching 30,000 feet, rendering them impervious to Italian fighters. Their productive photo runs over Taranto continued up to the very afternoon of the November 11 attack, providing the detailed real-time disposition of the Italian fleet. The Swordfish pilots knew exactly where their target ships were anchored.

Shortly after 8 p.m. on November 11 *Illustrious* arrived at "Point X" in the Ionian Sea, some 40 nautical miles northwest of the Greek island of Cephalonia and 170 nautical miles southeast of Taranto. Accidents, battle damage to HMS *Eagle* and operational mishaps had

reduced the strike force from two aircraft carriers to one (*Illustrious*) and 24 Swordfish to 21. Just before 8:30 p.m. on that cool moonlit evening Captain Denis Boyd turned his carrier into the wind as aircrews boarded the dozen Swordfish of the first wave.

Six of the aircraft carried torpedoes, four carried six 250-pound bombs, and two carried four bombs and 16 magnesium parachute flares. The flares were to be dropped from about 5,000 feet in line at intervals just inland from the harbor in order to silhouette the Italian ships for the attacking pilots.

At 8:30 p.m. the leader of the first wave, Lt. Cmdr. Kenneth "Hooch" Williamson, flew his torpedo plane from the deck of *Illustrious*. The other Swordfish followed at 10-second intervals, forming up on Williamson's aircraft for the two-hour, twenty-minute flight to Taranto. While the planes usually had a crew of three—pilot, observer and rear gunner—on this mission, the gunners were left behind to accommodate a long-range auxiliary fuel tank. Thus the observer, who doubled as the navigator, was to man the rear machine gun in a pinch. The crews would maintain radio silence during the operation, so he was at least spared that duty.

Flying in loose formation and eventually climbing above cloud cover at 7,500 feet, the thoroughly chilled pilots and observers had time to reflect on what may have seemed a suicide mission: They were approaching a stoutly defended port swept by searchlights and bristling with anti-aircraft guns. Their arrival would be no surprise to the Italian defenders, as ringing the harbor was a string of sound detectors that could pick up approaching aircraft as much as 25 miles nautical miles out. Forced by necessity, the Royal Navy pilots would make their final torpedo runs straight and level at wave-top height.

On the upside, the crews would have no problem spotting their targets. Alerted by the sound detectors a full 15 minutes before the first wave arrived around 11 p.m., the Italian gunners had filled the sky over Taranto with bright explosions and crisscrossing red, green and white tracer bullets. The two Swordfish carrying parachute flares soon dropped their beacons, further adding to the spectacle. It must have looked impossible to fly over the harbor without getting shot down. Indeed, the lead plane, piloted by Williamson, was promptly hit and downed. But not before Hooch had dropped to a height of just 30 feet and dropped his torpedo. The Italian battleship *Conte di Cavour* lay in plain view, thanks to the bright flares. The torpedo ran straight and true, striking the vessel on the port bow. Water rushed into the massive hole, forcing its helmsman to beach the ship.

As it turned from its attack run, Williamson's Swordfish was struck by machine-gun fire and dropped into the harbor. Both Williamson and his observer, Lt. Norman Scarlett, were unhurt. Eventually fished out of the water, they were accosted by angry dockworkers before being formally taken prisoner.

The Italians had considered their base untouchable by torpedo attacks, as both the inner and outer harbors were too shallow (at about 40 feet) for attacking submarines. Along that same line of thought, they believed all aerial-dropped torpedoes initially sank to some 90 feet before rising to strike level; were that true, the harbor would again prove too shallow. But the Royal Navy had modified its torpedoes to sink to a maximum of 35 feet before proceeding to the target. The weapons were also equipped with Duplex detonators, which would trigger the warheads either on contact or once within the ships' magnetic field, whichever came first. The Italians had deployed extensive anti-torpedo netting, but not enough to intercept these torpedoes.

A second and third Swordfish also launched torpedoes at *Conte di Cavour* but missed. The next two Swordfish attacked the battleship *Littorio* in quick succession, each of their torpedoes finding its mark. The torpedo from the first plane struck *Littorio*'s starboard bow, opening a hole some 30 by 50 feet. Dropped from just 400 yards out, the torpedo from the second plane opened a smaller hole in the ship's port quarter.



In preparation for the attack on Taranto, Royal Navy aircrews practiced extensively with the proven and highly effective Whitehead Mark XII torpedo.

The last torpedo plane approached over land and made its final run at the battleship *Vittorio Veneto*. Its torpedo exploded in the water short of its target. The pilot maneuvered dramatically nearly at mast-height before disappearing into the dark skies of the Ionian.

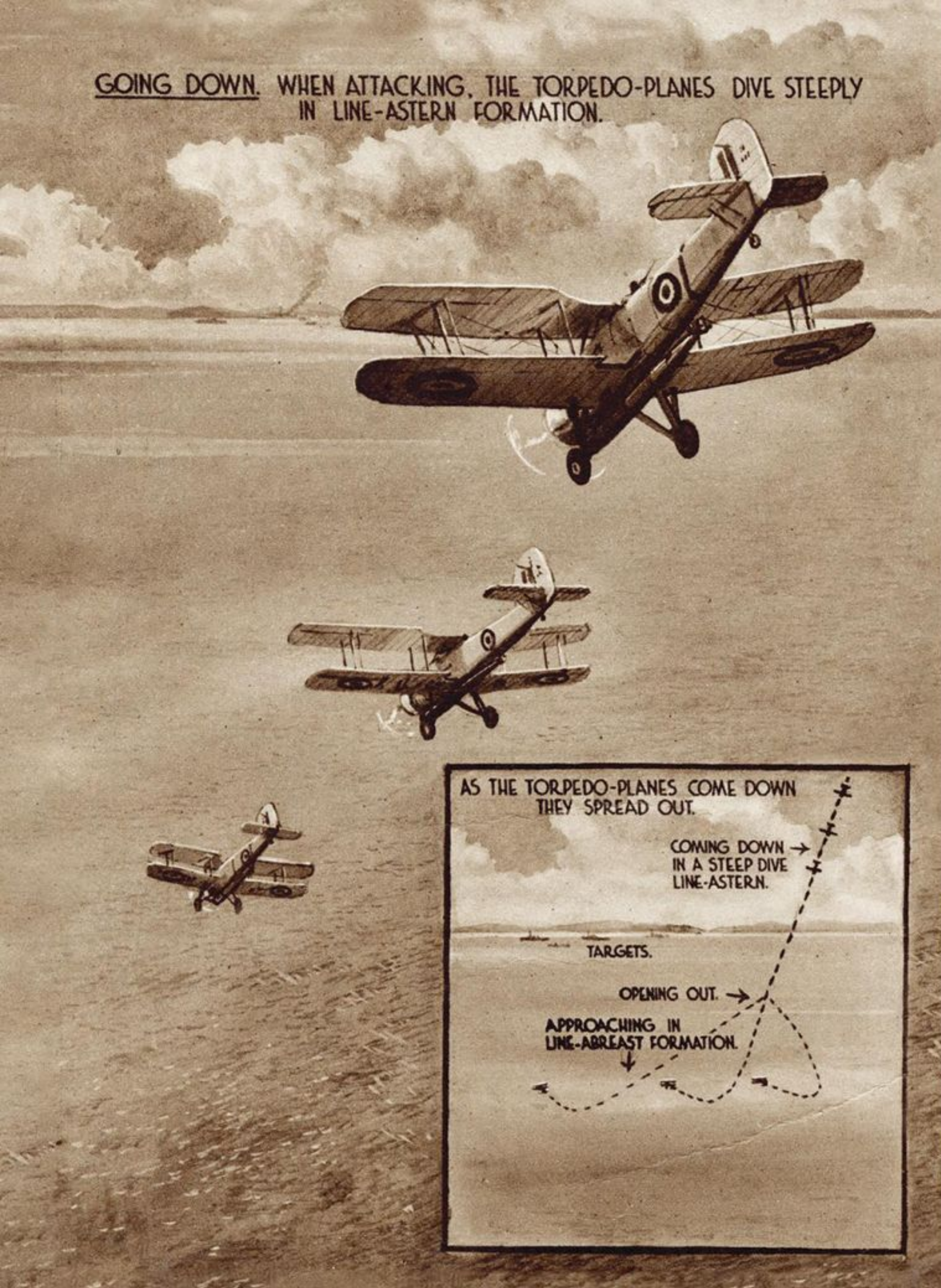
Though they had spent only a few minutes on target, the six torpedo bombers had seriously damaged two Italian battleships at the cost of one downed aircraft. Slow as they were, the gray-green camouflage-painted

The Royal Navy pilots would make their final runs straight and level at wave-top height

Swordfish were difficult to spot outside the beams of the searchlights, and the Italian anti-aircraft gunners were unable to target aircraft flying so close to the water. As it was, many of their projectiles instead struck neighboring ships and shore installations.

The follow-on Swordfish carrying six bombs each were less successful than the torpedo planes. The first two descended below their attack altitude of 8,000 feet but still could not locate their designated targets—the heavy cruisers anchored in the inner harbor. Most of their bombs went astray or failed to detonate, though one plane managed to hit a hangar at a seaplane base, setting it afire and destroying two aircraft. The third Stringbag

GOING DOWN. WHEN ATTACKING, THE TORPEDO-PLANES DIVE STEEPLY IN LINE-ASTERN FORMATION.



ESCAPE. IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DROP EACH TORPEDO-PLANE MAKES A STEEP CLIMBING TURN AND ESCAPES AT FULL SPEED.



Battle of Taranto

BRITISH FORCES

ONE AIRCRAFT CARRIER, TWO HEAVY CRUISERS, TWO LIGHT CRUISERS, FOUR DESTROYERS, 21 AIRCRAFT

2

KILLED

TWO CAPTURED,
TWO AIRCRAFT SHOT DOWN

ITALIAN FORCES

SIX BATTLESHIPS, NINE CRUISERS,
MORE THAN TWO DOZEN DESTROYERS,
NUMEROUS OTHER VESSELS

40

KILLED

600 WOUNDED, ONE BATTLESHIP
SUNK, TWO HEAVILY DAMAGED;
ONE HEAVY CRUISER SLIGHTLY
DAMAGED; TWO DESTROYERS
SLIGHTLY DAMAGED; TWO AIRCRAFT
DESTROYED ON THE GROUND

made two runs but hit nothing. The crew of the fourth claimed to have hit an Italian destroyer with a bomb, but the warhead failed to explode. All four aircraft got away safely. The last two planes of the first wave over the target were the flare-carrying Swordfish, each of which dropped its four bombs on an oil storage depot a mile inland.

By then the second wave of Swordfish, led by Lt. Cmdr. John W. "Ginger" Hale, was about 20 minutes out from Taranto, albeit short two aircraft. The last two of its nine planes had collided while taxiing on *Illustrious*. The carrier's flight deck crew got them untangled, but only one appeared airworthy and was able to take off. It had sustained damage, though, and was forced to turn back. Mechanics were able to repair the second plane, which launched late. Meanwhile, the seven other planes—five carrying torpedoes, two flares and bombs—climbed to 8,000 feet and arrived on target just before midnight.

Again the sky lit up in a kaleidoscope of antiaircraft fire.

After further illuminating the inner and outer harbors, the two flare-bearing Swordfish dropped their payloads on the oil depot and turned back to sea. Piloting the lead torpedo plane, Hale flew in from the northwest, making an end run around a line of barrage balloons to launch his torpedo at *Littorio*. It failed to detonate. A second Swordfish flew around the barrage balloons to the south,

but as it neared the rows of battleships and cruisers, close-range anti-aircraft fire shot it down, killing pilot Lt. Gerald Bayly and observer Lt. Henry Slaughtier.

The next attacker fared better, lining up for a clear run at the battleship *Caio Duilio*. Its torpedo struck amidships on the starboard side and opened a fatally large hole. As the warship threatened to founder, *Duilio's* helmsman turned the ship and beached it.

A fourth Swordfish maneuvered through the balloons and heavy anti-aircraft fire, approached *Littorio* at wave-top height and launched its torpedo from some 700 yards out. The weapon hit home on the starboard bow of the battleship, which began to list.

The final torpedo bomber, piloted by Lt. John Wellham, circled the inner harbor to approach the battleships from the southeast. Though his Swordfish caromed off a barrage balloon and was hit by anti-aircraft fire, Wellham managed to launch his torpedo at *Vittorio Veneto*. It missed the battleship but reportedly went on to strike and further damage *Conte di Cavour*. As Wellham made good his escape, his torpedo bomber sustained damage from flak, but the dauntless pilot kept it in the air.

Fifteen minutes later the straggler Swordfish damaged in the deck collision arrived alone over the harbor and released its payload of bombs on the heavy cruisers. One hit *Trento* but failed to explode. The time was 12:35 a.m. on November 12, and the attack on Taranto was over.

Once the last aircraft of the second wave had gotten away, Captain Boyd had turned *Illustrious* back toward

Tactical Takeaways

Plan Ahead

The Royal Navy began planning for an aerial torpedo attack on Taranto as early as 1935 and continually revised those plans until the actual strike.

Never Assume

By assuming that Taranto's inner and outer harbors were too shallow to allow aerial torpedo attacks, the Italians neglected to prepare for just such an assault.

Obsolete? Yes, but...

At Taranto the Fairey Swordfish proved that obsolete weapons can still prove dangerous if effectively employed.

Cephalonia and headed to a rendezvous point some 185 nautical miles from Taranto. There he had turned the carrier into the wind and prepared to recover the returning Swordfish. The first touched down at 1:40 a.m., the last at 2:50. Debriefing of the aircrews suggested the mission had inflicted serious damage on the Italian fleet, at a cost of two downed Swordfish, two men killed and two captured. A detailed assessment came later that morning after a reconnaissance flight by a Maryland out of Malta. It reported one battleship sunk (*Conte di Cavour*) and two beached (*Caio Duilio* and *Littorio*), plus damages to other ships as well as to the seaplane base and the oil depot. Forty Italian sailors had been killed.

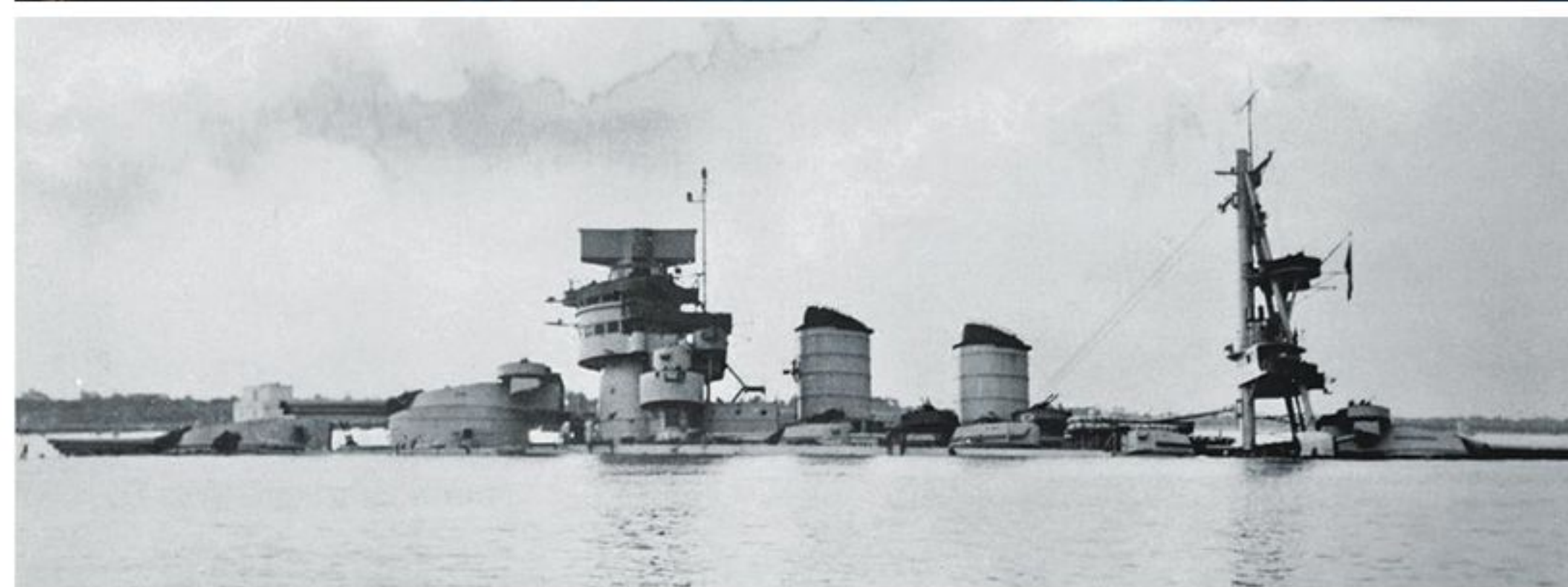
The original operational plan called for a return attack that night,

an idea reportedly met with a heartfelt and memorable protest from one of the pilots: "They only asked the Light Brigade to do it once!" In the end, given the approach of unfavorable weather, exhausted crews and the likelihood of more casualties, the powers that be cancelled the second strike.

The attack on Taranto was considered a decisive victory for Britain, and Prime Minister Winston Churchill touted it as such in a November 13 speech to the House of Commons. Indeed, the *Regia Marina* had lost half of its battleships. Though *Caio Duilio* and *Littorio* were refloated and repaired within six months, the severely damaged *Conte di Cavour* never returned to service. The Italians promptly moved their three operational battleships to berths in Naples, thus shifting the balance of naval power in the Mediterranean in favor of Britain.



The Italian battleships *Caio Duilio* (top) and *Conte di Cavour* (below) were hit by British torpedoes. The former was refloated and repaired, but the latter never returned to service.



Though Japanese naval observers were well aware of the success of the British attack on Taranto and gleaned what they could from its results, it was far from a blueprint for the far larger strike against Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on Dec. 7, 1941. It was, however, a useful proof-of-concept for a carrier-based aerial raid on a stationary fleet of surface ships—a potential lesson tragically unheeded by the U.S. Navy. **MH**

New York-based writer Michael W. Robbins is a former editor of *Military History* and *MHQ*. For further reading he recommends *Air Power*, by Stephen Budiansky, *Taranto 1940*, by Angus Konstam, and *War in a Stringbag*, by Charles Lamb.

Though Taranto foreshadowed the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Pacific Fleet proved as much a sitting duck as the *Regia Marina* had been.



BIG GUNS AFLOAT

Once the focus of a 20th century arms race, battleships have since become obsolete
By Jon Guttman





From the mid-1500s to the early 1800s the ultimate naval weapon was the wooden ship of the line, propelled by sail and bellowing broadsides from up to four rows of cannons. The advent of the Industrial Age spawned a succession of transformative innovations. Steam power and iron armor dispensed with several centuries' worth of naval technology in the 1860s, when ramming won victories at Hampton Roads, Va., in 1862 and Lissa in the Adriatic in 1866. Countering the ensuing development of steel armor, however, was the introduction of armor-piercing explosive shells. Rotating turrets and barbettes rendered multi-gun broadsides moot, and the modern battleship was born.

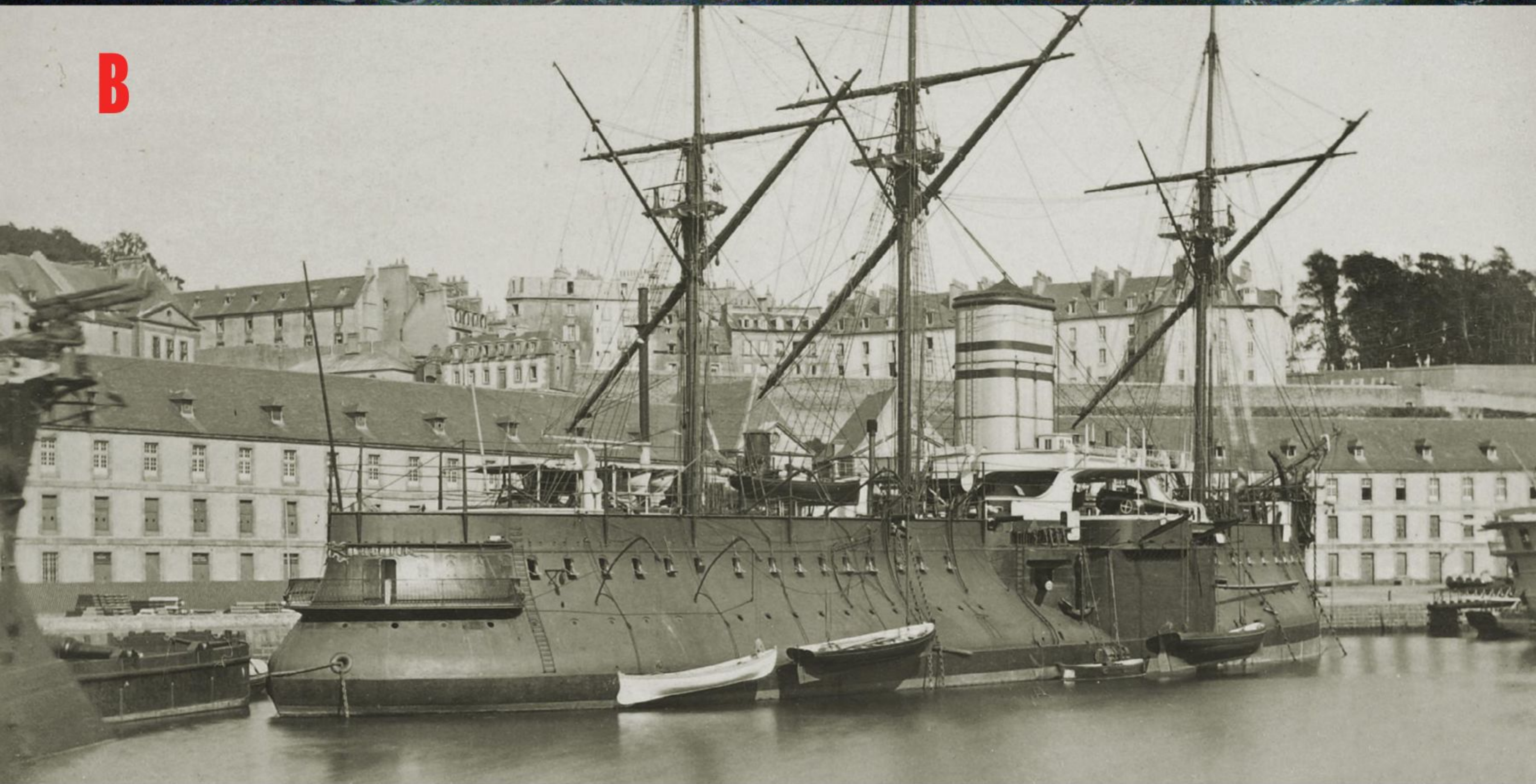
In 1906 the British incorporated all such developments into HMS *Dreadnought*, a game-changer in terms of size, firepower and speed. That in turn prompted an arms race with the growing, modernizing German navy—an underlying catalyst of World War I. During that war the big gunships had it out on May 31, 1916, in the epic but oddly inconclusive Battle of Jutland. The global conflict also saw the maturation of airplanes, mines, torpedoes and submarines, whose collective development seriously challenged the battleship's supremacy during World War II. From 1941 onward the battleship retained its relevance as a platform for not only artillery support, but also anti-aircraft guns and, later, nuclear and conventional cruise missiles. By the 21st century, however, the last of the battle-wagons retired as other vessels able to perform their duties just as well—not to mention infinitely cheaper—set sail. **MH**

Firing its nine 16-inch guns during a 1986 fleet exercise is USS *New Jersey*, which served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Lebanon. Decommissioned in 1990, the battleship missed out on Operation Desert Storm in 1991, though sister ships *Missouri* and *Wisconsin* got to loose their Tomahawk cruise missiles at Iraq. Today *New Jersey* is a museum ship in Camden, you-know-where.

BIG GUNS AFLOAT



A



B

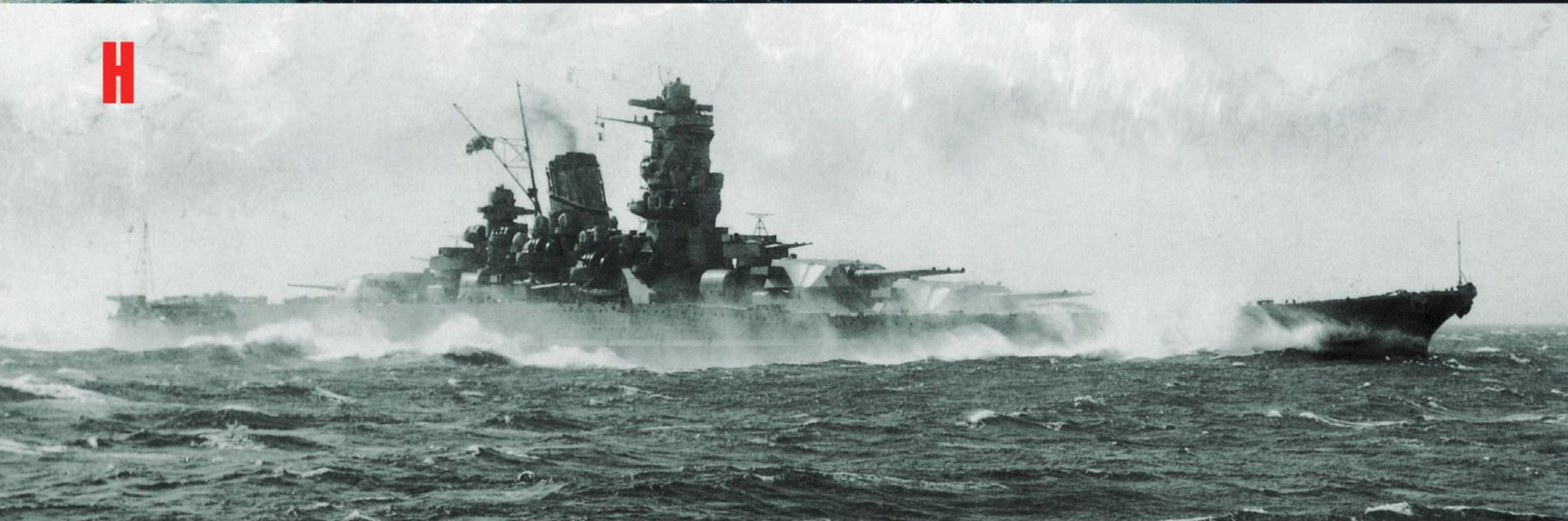
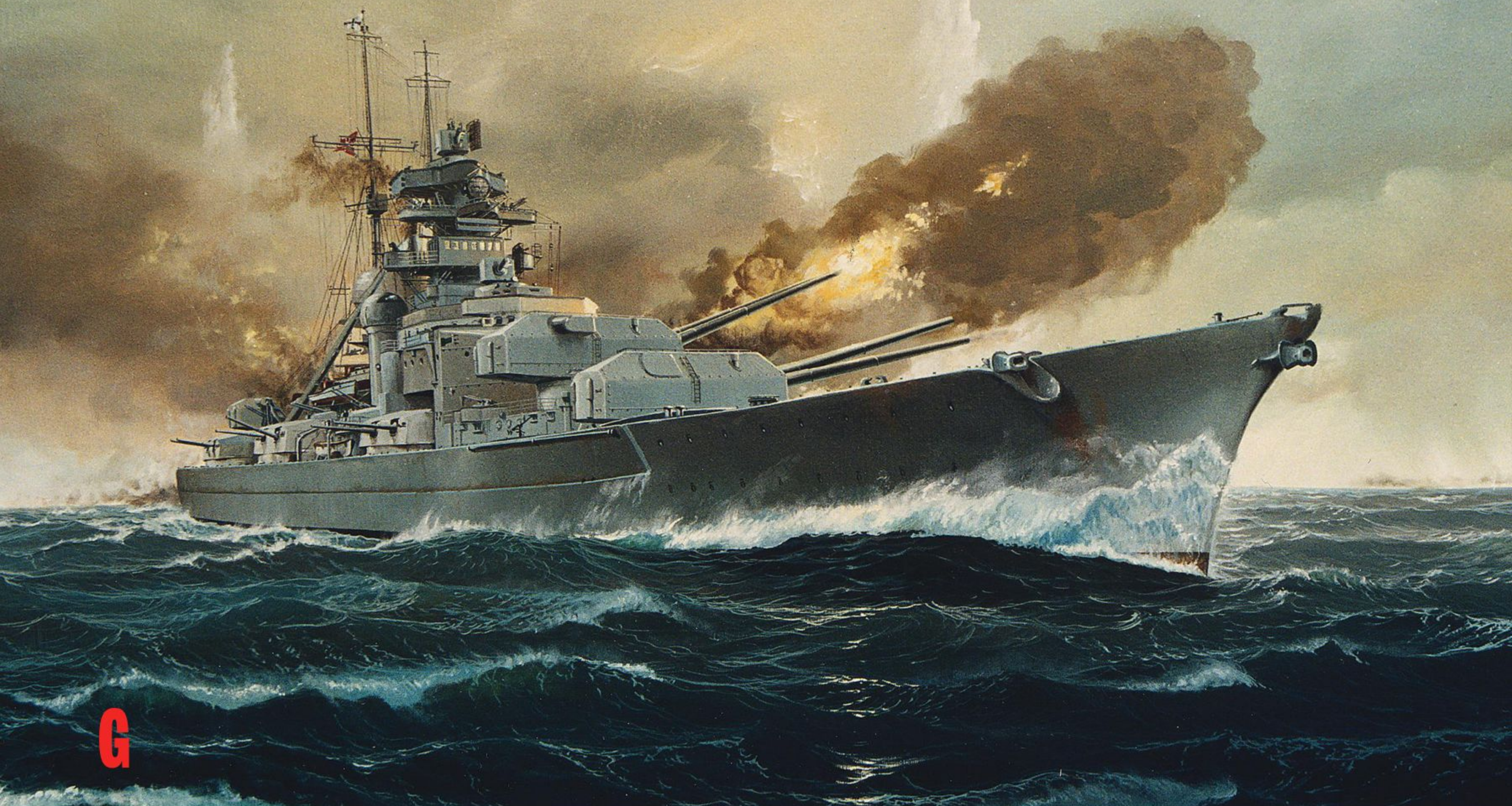
A French President Charles-Louis Napoléon Bonaparte enters Toulon in 1852 aboard a warship named for his uncle in a painting by Barthélemy Lauvergne. Launched in 1850, *Napoléon* was the first battleship to incorporate a steam engine driving a screw propeller. **B** Shown in Brest in 1882, the French battleship *Redoubtable* combined steam and sail with a tumblehome hull to counter top-heaviness and was the world's first warship to use steel as the principal construction material. **C** Mounting ten 12-inch guns in five turrets and capable of 21 knots, HMS *Dreadnought* revolutionized sea power in 1906 and launched a naval arms race. In World War I it rammed SM *U-29* on March 18, 1915, becoming the only battleship to sink a submarine in combat. **D** Armed with two 12-inch and six 6-inch guns, USS *Texas* was already behind the times when commissioned in 1895. Its half-sister *Maine* blew up in Havana Harbor on Feb. 15, 1898, and that spring *Texas* helped annihilate the Spanish cruiser squadron in the July 3 Battle of Santiago de Cuba. **E** Built by Vickers in Britain and commissioned in 1902, the Japanese battleship *Mikasa* mounted four 12-inch guns and served as flagship for Vice Adm. Heihachiro Togo during the 1904–05 Russo-Japanese War, which climaxed in the decisive naval Battle of Tsushima on May 27, 1905. A museum ship in Yokosuka, *Mikasa* is the only surviving pre-dreadnought battleship. **F** Shown aiding the armored cruiser HMS *Warrior* at Jutland in a painting by George Horace Davis, HMS *Warspite* bore eight 15-inch guns and served in World War II against German destroyers off Narvik, Norway, in April 1940, Italian cruisers off Cape Matapan, Greece, in March 1941 and in support of the June 1944 Normandy landings.



**The big gunships
had it out on
May 31, 1916,
in the epic
but oddly
inconclusive
Battle of Jutland**

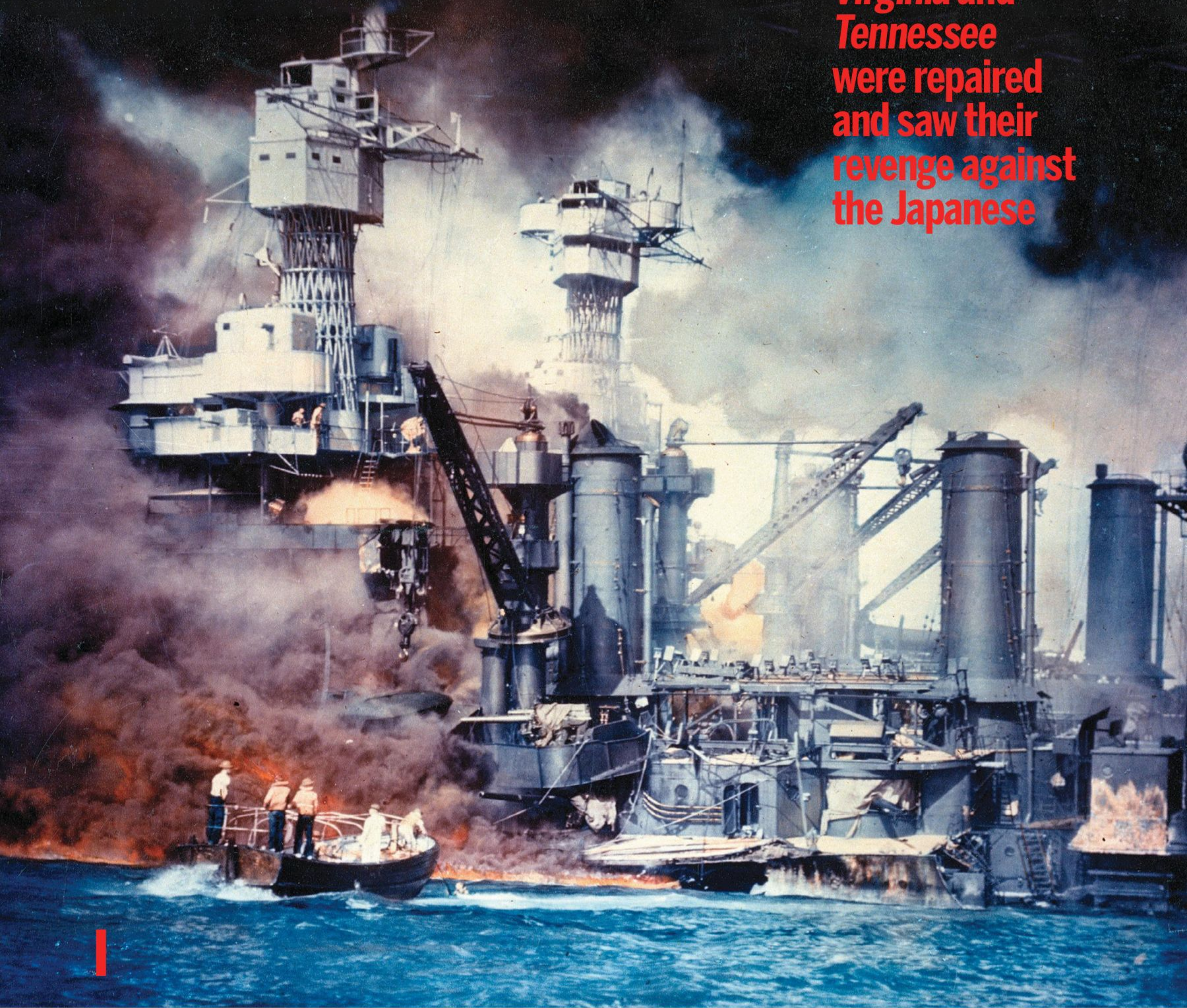


BIG GUNS AFLOAT



G The German battleship *Bismarck*'s combat career began auspiciously when it sank the battlecruiser HMS *Hood* on May 24, 1941, but it came to a Wagnerian end three days later, as depicted in Olaf Rahardt's painting *The Last Battle of the Bismarck*. After many attempts the British finally eliminated its sister, *Tirpitz*, with a Lancaster bomber attack off Tromsø, Norway, on Nov. 12, 1944. **H** With nine 18.1-inch guns in triple turrets, the Japanese battleship *Yamato*, shown during machinery trials on Oct. 20, 1941, was the largest battleship in history—for all the good it did. American carrier planes sank its sister, *Musashi*, in the Philippines on Oct. 24, 1944, and *Yamato* while it steamed toward Okinawa on April 7, 1945. **I** While British carrier planes had already proven their worth against stationary battleships at the Italian fleet base of Taranto on Nov. 11, 1940, Japanese carrier planes did a more thorough job of it at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on Dec. 7, 1941. *West Virginia* (foreground) and *Tennessee* were among eight battleships sunk or damaged, but both were repaired and saw revenge against the Japanese battleships *Yamashiro* and *Fuso* during the Battle of Surigao Strait in the Philippines on the night of Oct. 24, 1944. **J** Proving useful for offshore bombardment, USS *Missouri* fires three of its nine 16-inch guns at North Korean targets in Chongjin on Oct. 21, 1950. **K** Behind the memorial to the battleship USS *Arizona*, destroyed in the 1941 Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor, sits USS *Missouri*, aboard which the Japanese surrendered on Sept. 2, 1945.

**Both West
Virginia and
Tennessee
were repaired
and saw their
revenge against
the Japanese**



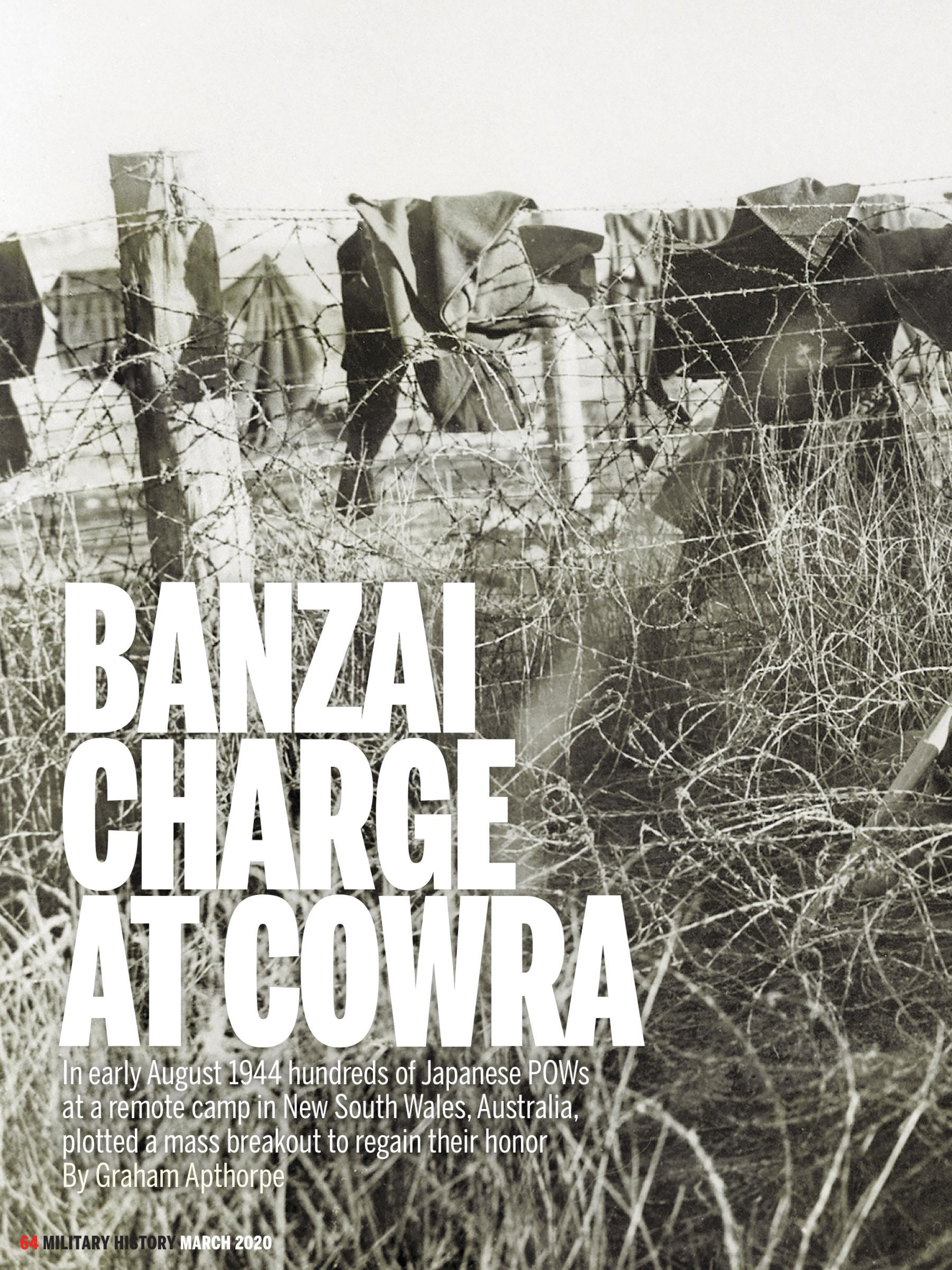
I



J



K



BANZAI CHARGE AT COWRA

In early August 1944 hundreds of Japanese POWs at a remote camp in New South Wales, Australia, plotted a mass breakout to regain their honor

By Graham Apthorpe



A Japanese POW lies dead along one of Cowra's fence lines the morning after the mass escape attempt. The prisoners had draped blankets over the barbed wire to enable them to scale the fences.

Days before the breakout attempt POWs gather on their compound's parade ground for the morning head count.



Priate Alfred Rolls was tired and cold.

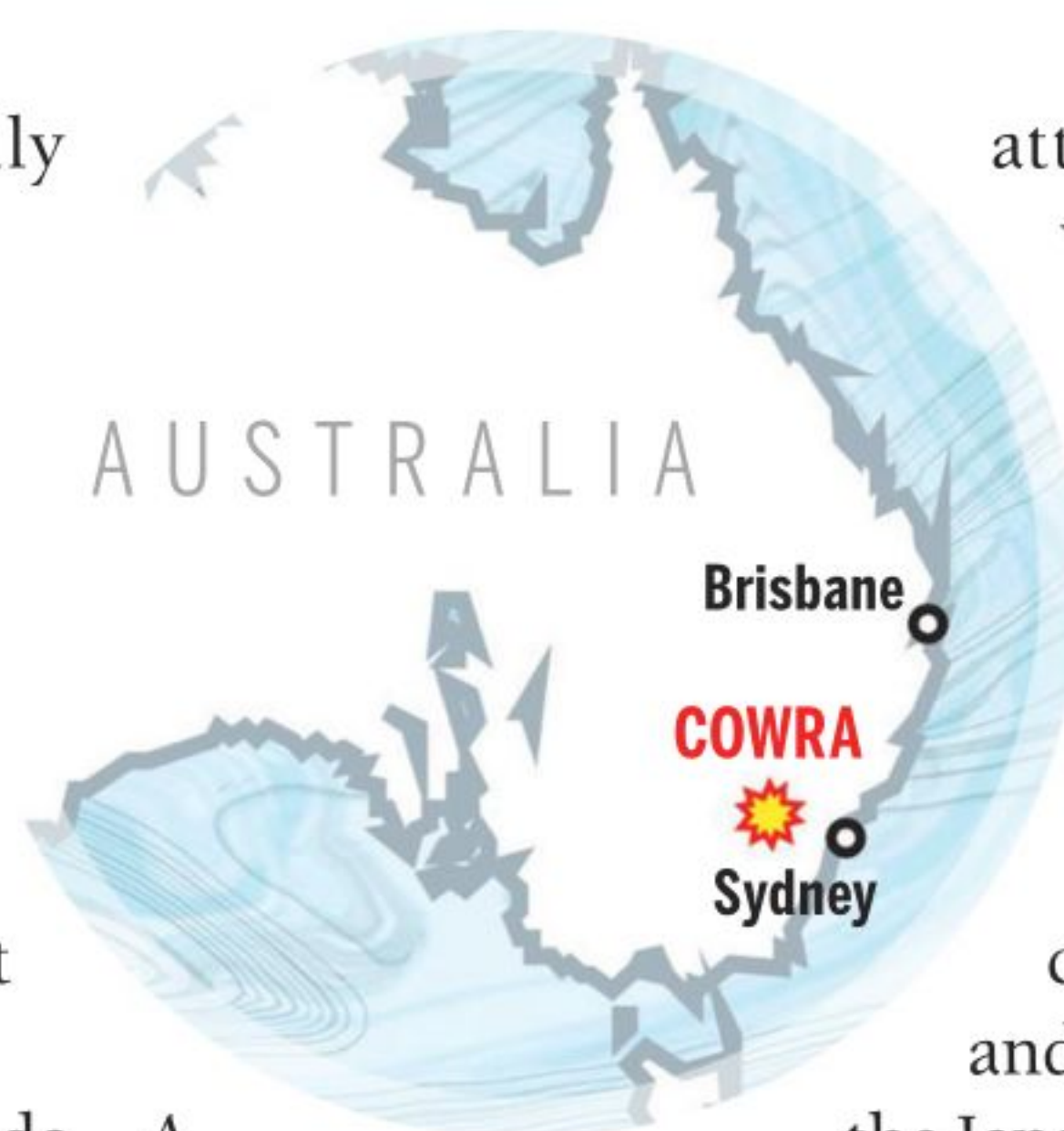
The 40-year-old was a member of the Australian army reserve's 22nd Garrison Battalion, which provided guards for the No. 12 Prisoner of War Camp near the small town of Cowra in rural New South Wales. On the cold winter's night of Aug. 5, 1944, Rolls was the lone sentry posted at the heart of "Broadway," the brightly lit strip of bare ground that bisected the sprawling circular camp. A small canvas tent, a standard wooden office chair and a telephone connecting his lonely post to the main guardhouse were his only comforts. Facing the center of camp were double gates leading to each of the four prisoner compounds, and Rolls was to watch for any motion from inside. To keep his circulation going, the middle-aged guard kept moving, strolling and stamping his frigid feet on the hard-packed dirt.

Though uncomfortable, his guard shift was uneventful. Then, shortly before 2 a.m., he noticed a figure bobbing among the buildings in B Compound—the northeast quadrant of camp, which housed some 1,100 Japanese POWs. As the figure ran toward the compound gates, Rolls realized the man was trying to get his attention. The prisoner quickly scaled the inner gate and approached the outer gate, all the while speaking rapidly in Japanese. Not understanding the language but noting the man's frantic state, Rolls assumed the worst, pointed his rifle in the air and fired two shots—the prearranged alarm signal. Moments later his telephone rang. The guard picked up the receiver and reported what he had seen.

What Rolls had seen was the opening act of what would become the largest mass POW escape of World War II.

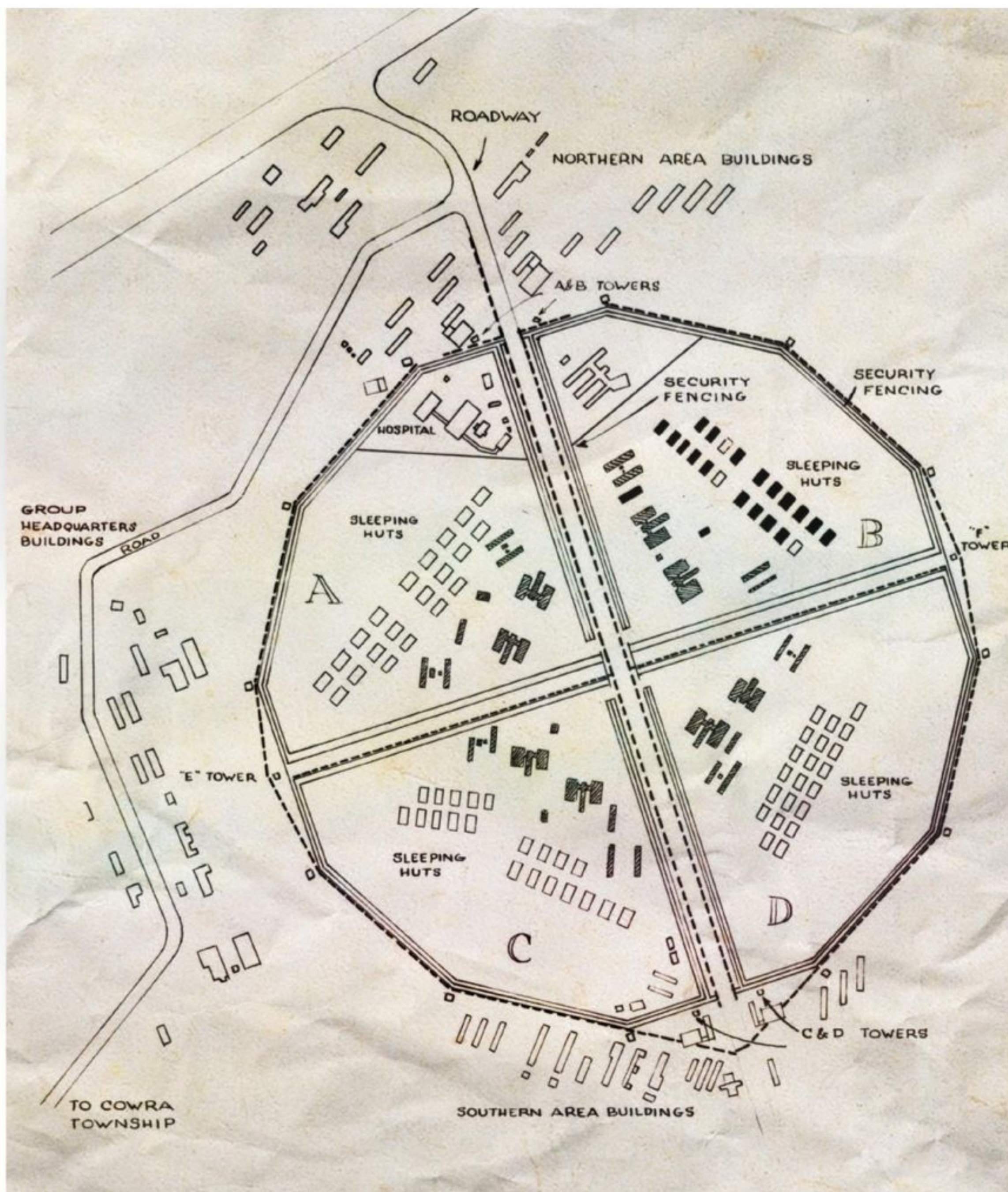
Opened in June 1941, Cowra initially housed Italian POWs shipped to Australia from the battlefields of North Africa, as well as Indonesian civilian internees. Following the British Commonwealth's declaration of war on Japan that December 8 the camp was enlarged to accommodate anticipated Japanese prisoners. The first arrived in Cowra soon after the January 1942 onset of the Allied campaign in New Guinea.

The camp comprised four compounds—A, B, C and D—each guarded by a 100-man company of the 22nd Garrison Battalion. Italians from the North Africa campaign were in A and C, to the northwest and southeast, respectively. Japanese officers, as well as Koreans and ethnic Chinese from Formosa (present-day Taiwan)



attached to the Imperial Japanese Army, were held in D Compound, to the southwest. B Compound was the primary Japanese prisoner complex, holding warrant officers, noncommissioned officers and enlisted men.

Australian and U.S. forces had captured the Japanese amid the fighting on New Guinea. Having arrived in the combat zone with only basic supplies and few effective medicines for the tropics, the Japanese had suffered all jungle warfare had to offer. Malaria, parasitic and fungal infections, insect-borne diseases, malnutrition and poorly treated wounds took their toll as the campaign turned inexorably in favor of the Allies. When captured, many of the Japanese were in a semicomatose state or unconscious from wounds.



After initial questioning, those Japanese POWs considered of value to Allied intelligence services were flown to Brisbane for further attention by the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section. Its interrogators—including Japanese-American soldiers—employed a highly structured process to cull useful information. Finding themselves in an alien environment and unable to rationalize their situation, Japanese POWs were often at a loss. During training they had not been advised how to handle interrogation, simply because capture was unthinkable; one was expected to die fighting. Their resulting bewilderment prompted bizarre levels of cooperation and seeming betrayal of their fellow Japanese. When asked a question, most of the POWs simply answered, often revealing sensitive information. Most captives “broke” after the first two days and willingly provided answers for up to two weeks. After that the information tended to be embellished, even fabricated, as prisoners gained familiarity with their surroundings and looked to continue the benefits of cooperation.

When their value as useful sources expired, the POWs were in for a long train ride—nearly 600 miles south from Brisbane to Sydney, then another 200 miles west to Cowra.

By mid-1944 the Cowra camp was bursting at the seams, and a mass transfer was in order. On Friday, August 4, Maj. Robert Ramsay, the commandant in charge of B Compound, summoned the Japanese POWs’ leaders—Sgt. Maj. Akira Kanazawa and Sgts. Maseo Kojima and

Above left: Cowra was split into four individually run compounds, with the Japanese in B. Above: Ringing the camp perimeter was a triple row of man-height barbed wire fences and elevated guard towers at regular intervals.

Hajime Toyoshima (aka Tadao Minami)—to an afternoon meeting in his office. There Ramsay abruptly told the men that 700 prisoners, all those below the rank of lance corporal, were to be moved to the POW camp outside Hay, an even more isolated community some 270 miles farther west. The trio forcefully objected to the plan, insisting the Japanese were family and must stay together. Ramsay dismissed their protests and ordered them to have the men ready to move first thing Monday morning.

Rebuffed and resentful, the Japanese leaders returned to B Compound and told their fellow prisoners to begin gathering or making weapons. The POWs duly collected baseball bats provided by the Australians for recreation and raided the compound’s mess hall for knives and other metal cutlery. Though the latter implements were to have been counted by the guards and stored in a safe location after every use, the cutlery had never been secured. Purloined garden and carpentry tools rounded out the prisoners’ arsenal.

The Japanese leaders’ anger at the news didn’t overly concern the Australians, who apparently believed Cowra to be escape-proof. If such was the case, the captors obviously hadn’t been paying attention. Sixteen months earlier a noncom POW from B Compound had escaped,



Among the implements Japanese POWs employed during the breakout were, from top, baseball bats and wooden poles used as weapons; baseball gloves to overcome barbed wire; and mess hall knives and other bladed weapons.

alone and with apparent ease. He was captured after nine hours on the run, and during a subsequent inquiry he demonstrated his method of escape. The man required just two minutes and 40 seconds to get over the triple row of 6-foot-high perimeter fences, and he smoked a ciga-

Rolls was running for his life south down Broadway, lungs burning and heart pounding

rette during the entire exercise. Cowra's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Montague "Monty" Brown, had afterward pleaded with military authorities in Sydney to bolster security at the camp. Despite his recommendations, the fences remained scarcely taller than the average man.

That lapse was to have deadly consequences when the coordinated breakout—part military operation, part

mass suicide—exploded without warning moments after Alfred Rolls fired his two shots into the air.

From the door of a hut some 200 yards from where Rolls stood, one of Sgt. Minami's men turned and shouted inside, "Minami-san, there's an informer at the wire!" A dozen Japanese sprang from the hut in pursuit but failed to reach the informer before he clambered over the second gate into Broadway.

Realizing they'd lost the element of surprise, Minami sounded a bugle, signaling hundreds of prisoners to swarm from their huts, repeatedly screaming "*Banzai!*" at the top of their lungs. Despite the seeming chaos, each group had an objective. One mass of men ran north in a suicidal charge on a section of perimeter fence defended by machine guns, another pressed east toward the surrounding bush, while a third group spilled into Broadway to rush the north and south main gates. POWs in the latter group soon caught up to the informer. Clubbing the man to the ground, they cut his throat and kicked his body aside.

Meanwhile, Rolls was running for his life south down Broadway, lungs burning and heart pounding. Guards opened the main gates just enough to allow his passage, then quickly slammed them shut. Seconds later a screaming mass of prisoners hit the gates like a tidal wave. Rifle fire kept them at bay, but by that point 18 of the 21 prisoner huts and two other buildings were ablaze.

As the fight along Broadway unfolded, the eastbound group of POWs headed toward a section of perimeter fence near F Tower. Careful observation over the preceding weeks had allowed the Japanese to work out the towers' fields of fire and determine the areas where they would be most safe from the guards' weapons. On the prisoners' approach tower guard Pvt. Kevin Mancer quickly burned through the five box magazines he'd been provided for his 9 mm Owen submachine gun. Though he had hand grenades, the tight confines of the tower kept him from extending his arm back far enough to hurl the projectiles with any distance or accuracy. Throwing blankets across the wire, the Japanese fled en masse into the darkness.

Among the ringleaders rushing the eastern perimeter was Yoshio Shimoyama, who while doing so committed an act of brutality that horrified even the hardened Japanese. On encountering a badly wounded countryman at his feet, he produced an improvised knife and unhesitatingly stabbed the injured man in the throat, killing him. (Four days later fellow Japanese POWs who had witnessed Shimoyama's wanton cruelty meted out his execution, strangling him for the crime.)

The unfortunate group of POWs sent north against the two Vickers machine guns faced a murderous crossfire of .303-caliber bullets. But they just kept coming, clambering over the bodies of their dead countrymen to blanket and vault the perimeter fences in turn. Once over the outer



fence, several of the escapees went after Pvts. Ben Hardy and Ralph Jones, the duo manning the closest Vickers gun.

When the initial alarm had sounded, two teams of two men each had raced toward the machine guns, which were mounted on separate four-wheel trailers—No. 1 near the north main gates, No. 2 slightly to the east. Hardy and Jones quickly got No. 2 gun into action, but the relentless Japanese were soon streaming over the outer fence. The gunners could have easily saved their lives by abandoning the gun and its store of ammunition belts. Instead, they remained at their post and acted with cool resolve. Summoning all of his courage, Hardy stopped firing. Telling Jones to run for it, he then lifted the Vickers' top cover, removed the feed block and tossed it aside, ensuring the weapon could not be fired by the Japanese, who were soon clawing their way onto the trailer. They viciously beat and stabbed Hardy to death. Despite stab wounds to his chest and back, Jones managed to break free. Arriving at the other gun, he mumbled a couple of words before also falling dead. (For their actions Hardy and Jones each received a posthumous George Cross, the noncombat equivalent of the Victoria Cross.)

When the Japanese atop the No. 2 machine-gun trailer turned the Vickers on their captors and found the unfamiliar weapon wouldn't fire, they fumbled for a solution. The delay enabled rifle-bearing guards to advance and kill them. Meanwhile, the gunners on the No. 1 Vickers kept firing and finally suppressed the mass attack on the north perimeter.

Inside the wire, on the north end of Broadway, guards from A and B compounds were firing

Several of the 18 sleeping huts intentionally burned by the POWs in B Compound still smolder the morning after the attempted escape. The prisoners also torched two other buildings within the compound.

rifles and a Bren gun into the Japanese rushing the gates. Three of the Australians were wounded by friendly fire from guards at the south end of Broadway, who kept shooting into the group of escapees attacking that end of camp. Able-bodied guards carried the injured men to safety in nearby huts as the POWs continued to assault the north main gates under heavy fire. One determined prisoner managed to scale the gates with an improvised dagger and club in hand. Dashing past guard Wal McKenzie, the lone escapee ran toward the B Company buildings, en route stabbing Pvt. Charles Shepherd in the heart and kill-





Left: Many of the POWs committed suicide when they realized they could not get out of the camp. Officials held a public funeral for the three Australians killed in camp.



Vickers .303

Two of the five Australians who died amid the breakout attempt—Pvts. Ben Hardy and Ralph Jones—were killed while manning a Vickers gun on the camp's north perimeter. Capable of firing up to 500 rounds a minute, the camp's machine guns took a grievous toll on POWs.

ing him instantly. Major Ramsay witnessed the killing and ordered one of his soldiers to shoot the Japanese, who soon lay dead mere yards from Shepherd's body.

On the south end of Broadway prisoners sought to link up with the officers in D Compound. When one of the officers, physician Ichiro Fujita, moved to join the surge, Cpl. Don Angwin, a skilled marksman brought in from the nearby military training camp, put a bullet through each of Fujita's thighs. The doctor bled to death where he fell. His death heralded the end of the Cowra breakout, which had lasted just 30 minutes.

While the Australian guards had killed 180 Japanese POWs during the mass escape attempt, more than 300 others had made it into the bush. Late on the after-

noon of the breakout eight of the escapees ambushed a group of young Australian recruits searching a wooded area west of the camp. The recruits had been issued only with bayonets, and when the Japanese attacked, they fell back while their leader, Lt. Harry Doncaster, tried to fight off the assault with his fists. Tragically, the Japanese used a bayonet one of Doncaster's own recruits had dropped to kill the young officer. All eight escapees later hanged themselves from nearby trees.

The breakout indirectly resulted in the death of one more Australian. Volunteer Defence Corps Sgt. Thomas Hancock was dismounting from a truck to patrol the local rail lines and bridges when a soldier stepping from the same truck accidentally discharged his rifle into the sergeant's buttocks. Though the wound appeared superficial, Hancock died of septicemia nine days later.

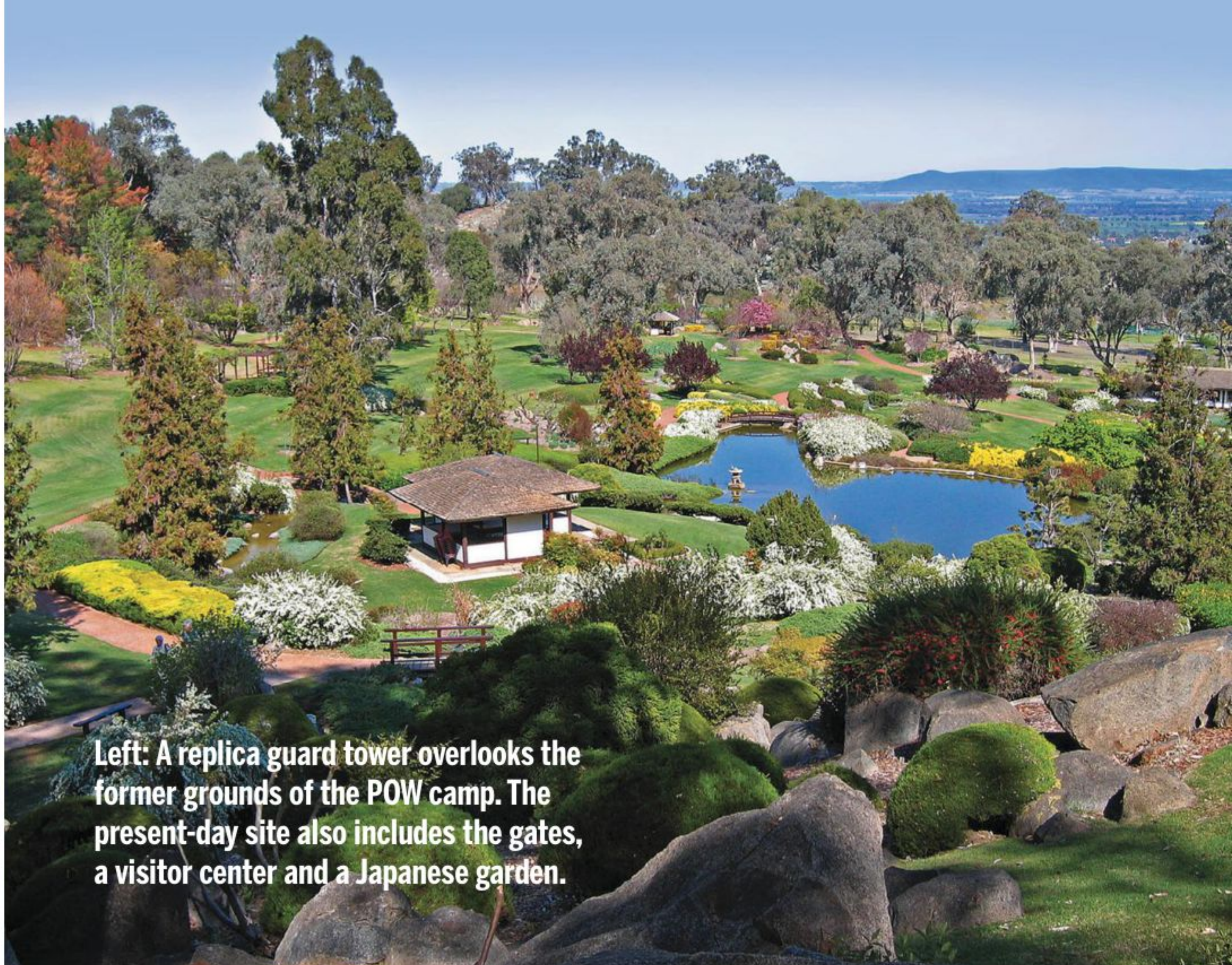
In the days following the breakout small groups of roaming and lost Japanese met a variety of fates at the hands of locals. While one shotgun-wielding farmer gunned down two of the escapees, others treated the POWs more benignly. When a trio of Japanese showed up at Walter and May Weir's family farmhouse, for example, Mrs. Weir insisted they sit down for tea and scones while her daughter fetched the police from Cowra.

Back at camp Australian doctors treated wounded prisoners with minor injuries, while more serious cases were sent in ambulances to the military hospital at Goulburn, some three hours' drive to the southeast. Of the 108 Japanese wounded, only three died of their injuries—a testament to the care provided them.

By the time the manhunt ended, the final death toll stood at 231 Japanese and five Australians.

For Australian authorities the aftermath was mixed. Mindful of their own 22,000 men being held in Japanese POW camps, they had to investigate and report the incident carefully. A press ban went into immediate effect. Not until September 9 did Prime Minister John Curtin make a public announcement regarding the breakout, citing a riot by Japanese POWs. A propaganda report picked up soon after on Japanese radio declared the dead could not have been prisoners of war, as Japanese soldiers never surrender. Instead, the report accused the Australians of "the cold-blooded murder of Japanese civilian internees." A meticulous military court of inquiry, which delivered its findings to Tokyo via the Swiss Consulate in Sydney, put any such nonsense to rest. It found conditions at the camp exemplary and the actions of the officers and guards of the 22nd Garrison Battalion both necessary and measured. An independent inquiry by the Swiss backed up the findings.

In January 1945 Australian authorities charged breakout leader Akira Kanazawa with murder—more specifi-



Left: A replica guard tower overlooks the former grounds of the POW camp. The present-day site also includes the gates, a visitor center and a Japanese garden.

cally with actions that resulted in the death of Vickers gunner Ben Hardy. Acquitted of that charge, Kanazawa was found guilty of “conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline” and handed an 18-month sentence he wouldn’t serve out. In March 1946 he and the surviving Japanese POWs from the Cowra and Hay camps were repatriated on the Japanese steamer *Daikai Maru*.

Cowra has experienced much healing since the 1940s. Indeed, the town—home to a stunning Japanese garden and cultural center and the only Japanese war cemetery outside of Japan—has become emblematic of the positive present-day relationship between Australia and Japan. Former POWs and their onetime guards convened in Cowra on numerous occasions over the decades to revisit the scene of the deadly escape attempt. The elderly Japanese, in particular, found comfort in visiting the graves of dead comrades and paying their respects at the graves of the Australians.

Far from being ashamed of having been prisoners, some formed associations back in Japan to recognize that consequential time in their lives. Masatoshi Kigawa, president of the group Cowra Kai, spoke openly about his wartime experiences, in particular the suffering he and his fellow Japanese had endured in New Guinea:

Who helped us? It was the Australian army. They took us back to Australia and took every possible care of us, providing us with food, clothes and shelter. Though they had a right to compel us to engage in work in the light of public international law, they tolerated our rejection and did not compel us. We were impressed with a humanitarianism rooted in the Australian army, thanks to which we acted as we liked and led a relatively easy life [in camp].

The present-day Cowra POW Campsite preserves the memory of the breakout and those Japanese and Australians who died. Covering several acres, the site includes the garrison gates, a replica guard tower, a visitor center and the POW Hologram Theater, where interactive displays relate the story of the mass escape and its aftermath. Those who survived the bloodletting would never forget. **MH**

A 30-year resident of Cowra, Graham Apthorpe is director of corporate services for the town council. For further reading he recommends his own *A Town at War and The Man Inside*, as well as *Die Like the Carp!* by Harry Gordon, and *The Night of a Thousand Suicides*, by Teruhiko Asada.

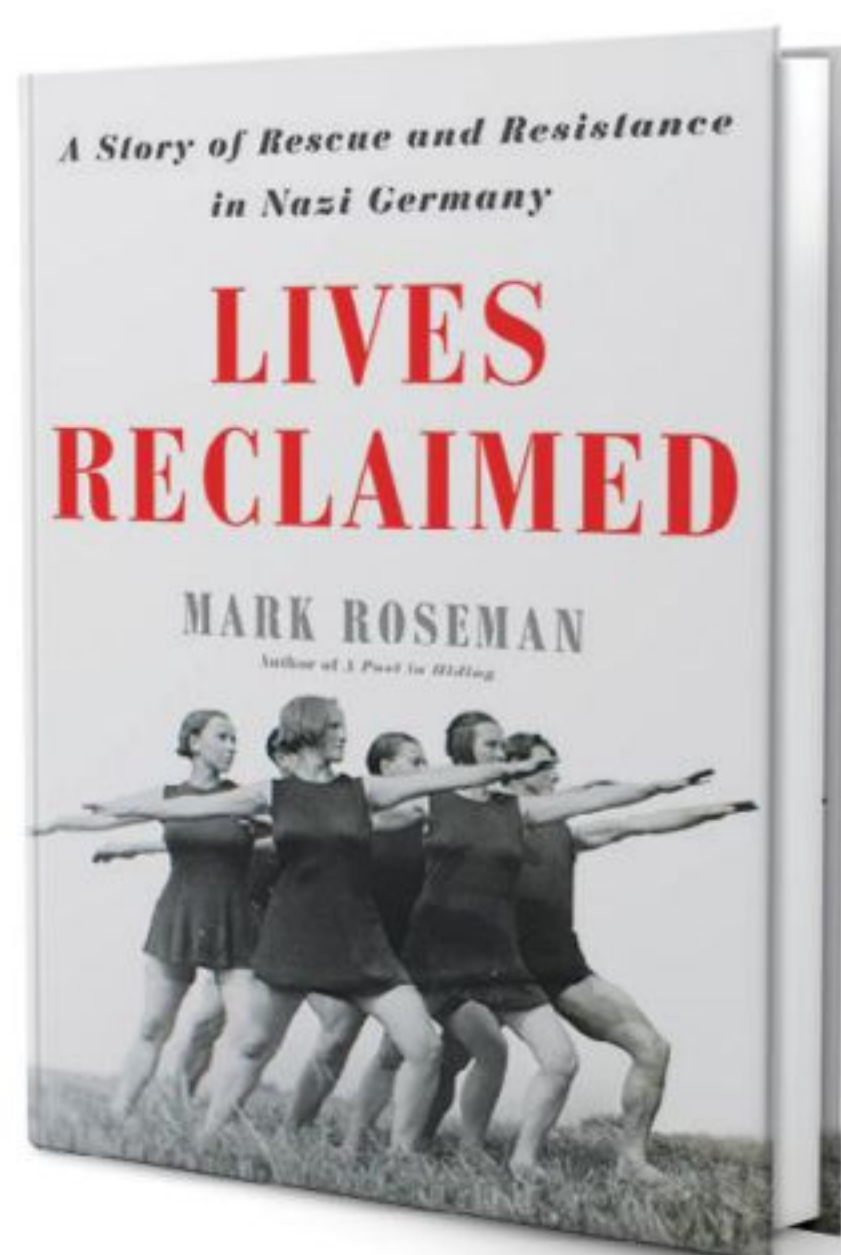


Former POW Teruo Murakami, 98, prays while visiting the Cowra site on the 75th anniversary of the attempted escape.

Reviews



Jews in prewar Germany faced daily anti-Semitism, insults and mortal peril at the hands of Nazi authorities, but a determined few stepped in to offer aid.



Lives Reclaimed: A Study of Rescue and Resistance in Nazi Germany, by Mark Roseman, Metropolitan Books, New York, 2019, \$30

Resisting Nazism

In the lead-up to World War II daily living conditions for people of Jewish ancestry in Germany were steadily declining and anti-Semitism was sharply rising. Even small acts of defiance—for example, criticizing the government among friends or buying products from a Jewish-owned store—could have potentially lethal consequences. It took people of extraordinary courage to withstand the constant peril and psychological stress, aid others and evade detection by authorities.

Mark Roseman's *Lives Reclaimed* documents the fascinating story of the League: Community for Socialist Life, known to members as the *Bund* (German for "federation"). Led by the charismatic Artur Jacobs, the little-known group centered on the utopian ideals of romanticism, physical fitness, social democracy and universalism. In the wake of the 1938 *Kristallnacht* pogrom Bund mem-

bers resolved they could no longer ignore the downward spiral of German society and began providing practical aid as well as spiritual and emotional comfort to those in need. The book also relates the internal struggles of those Bund members drafted into military service and members' ongoing struggle to keep the Bund network operating through skillful guidance, information gathering and sheer luck.

Lives Reclaimed is an object lesson in how even small acts of resistance, especially during wartime, provided necessary spiritual succor to people suffering from the deprivations and persecution imposed on them by the Nazi regime. It is a respectful testament to an admirable group of brave men and women who saved lives and whose heroic, generous deeds are well deserving of public recognition.

—S. L. Hoffman

Return to the Reich: A Holocaust Refugee's Secret Mission to Defeat the Nazis, by Eric Lichtblau, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston and New York, 2019, \$28

"How was it," wondered writer Eric Lichtblau aloud to an elderly Holocaust survivor he knew, "that so many anonymous people did such heroic things during the Holocaust, yet we only learned about them after they died? Tell me someone that I'll wish I had heard about before they die?" That conversation led the author to 94-year-old Fred Mayer, who in 1945 had parachuted into Austria at the head of a three-man Office of Strategic Services (OSS, a precursor to the CIA) team. As an expatriate German Jew, Mayer knew he would receive no mercy if caught. In Austria he impersonated both a German officer and a French laborer, survived capture and torture by the Gestapo, and ultimately brokered the surrender of Innsbruck on behalf of the Allies.

Mayer's father, a Jewish businessman who had served with distinction as an officer in the German army during World War I, initially believed

his Iron Cross combat decoration would protect his family from the Nazis. Finally facing reality, Mayer led his family out in 1938 and resettled them in Brooklyn.

Although Mayer was quick to volunteer when the United States entered World War II, he was initially rejected as an "enemy alien" due to his German roots. During his Army training, however, Mayer demonstrated leadership, resourcefulness and endurance. Those qualities and his ability to speak German led to his transfer to the newly organized OSS.

Lichtblau's narrative of Mayer and his fellow agents reads like fiction in places. OSS agents operated in secret, and much of what they achieved has yet to be revealed. *Return to the Reich* is a fitting memorial to Mayer, who died in 2016, and his many unsung comrades.

—Robert Guttman

The Women Who Flew for Hitler: A True Story of Soaring Ambition and Searing Rivalry, by Clare Mulley, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2018, \$20

Dual biographies are hard. Achieving a balance between two subjects, even when both relate to a broader topic, requires judgment and finesse.

British author Clare Mulley is an accomplished biographer well suited to tackle the Third Reich's leading female pilots: namely, the celebrated Hanna Reitsch and the lesser-known but highly competent Melitta von Stauffenberg. Of the two, Reitsch still comes across as the more impressive. She was equally adept at sailplanes, powered airplanes

and helicopters. During the war she mastered the treacherous Reichenberg manned V-1. Then in April 1945 she flew a Fieseler Fi 156 Storch into the Berlin rubble to deliver new *Luftwaffe* chief Robert Ritter von Greim to a final audience with Adolf Hitler.

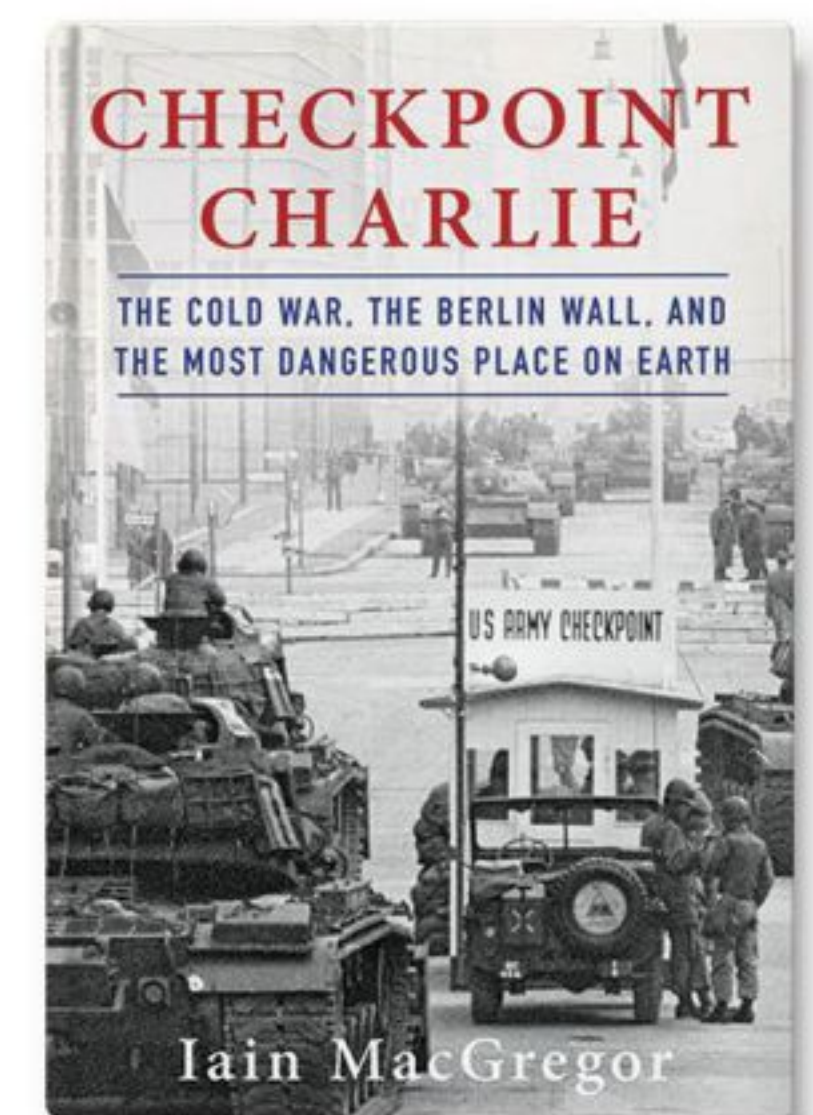


After the war she continued to excel in gliders and helicopters, working in India and Ghana. She died, seemingly an unrepentant Nazi, in 1979.

Von Stauffenberg, born Melitta Schiller in 1903, was bred for success. She studied science and engineering, graduating with an aeronautical specialty in 1927. Nine years older than Reitsch, she married in 1937 into the titled von Stauffenberg family, which featured disastrously in the 1944 attempt to assassinate Hitler. Though a distinguished aviator, she preferred Red Cross work but was essentially drafted as a test pilot, conducting hundreds of dive-bombing flights. Consequently, she and Reitsch both earned the honorific *Flugkapitänin*.

Mulley treats both women equitably, though Reitsch's malleable attitude toward National Socialism is a source of criticism throughout the text. British test pilot Eric

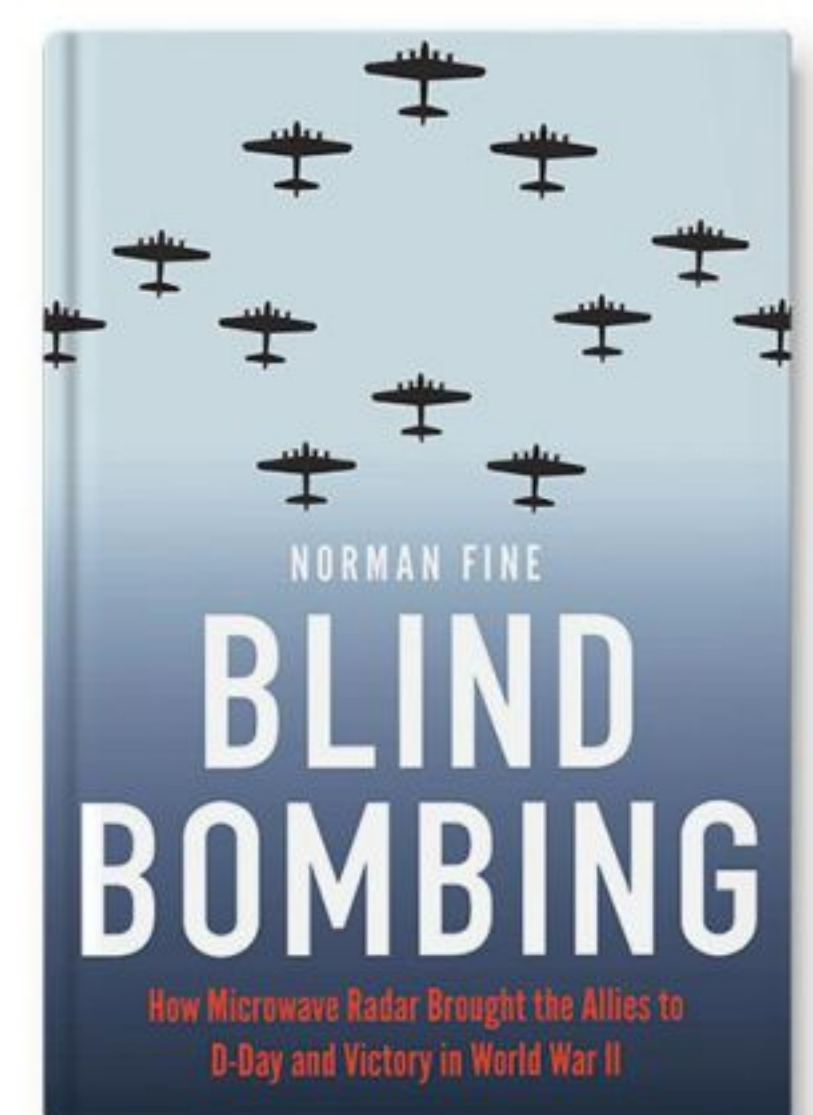
Recommended



Checkpoint Charlie

Iain MacGregor

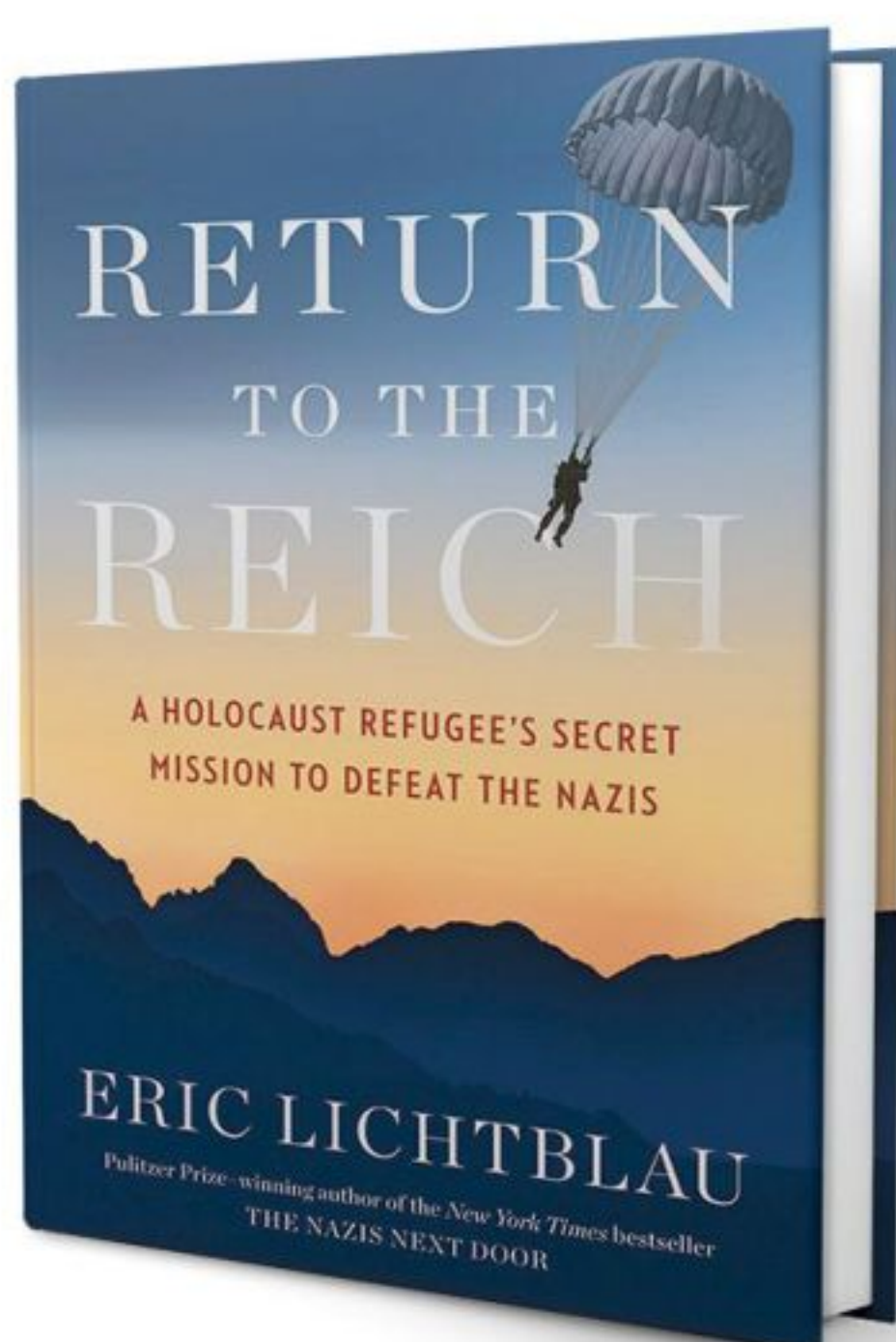
In this fascinating volume—subtitled *The Cold War, the Berlin Wall, and the Most Dangerous Place on Earth*—British author MacGregor lets the people who lived or worked near the infamous East-West crossing point tell their stories. The result is a riveting and personal account of everyday life along the Berlin Wall and an essential addition to Cold War literature.



Blind Bombing

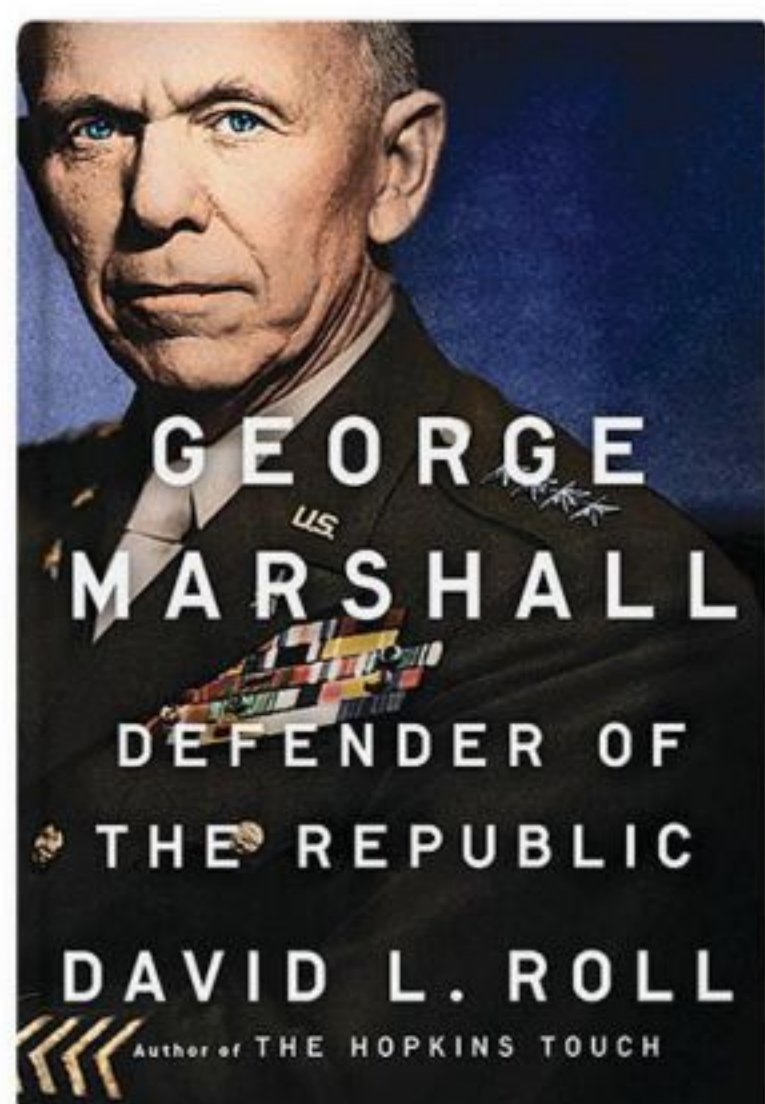
Norman Fine

The story of radar's World War II transformation from a technical curiosity to a previously unimaginable offensive weapon is relatively unknown. This book charts the way in which two men—one an opinionated engineer, the other an easy-going 21-year-old—and their handful of cohorts pioneered a revolution in warfare by trying, failing, persevering and ultimately formulating new tactics.



Reviews

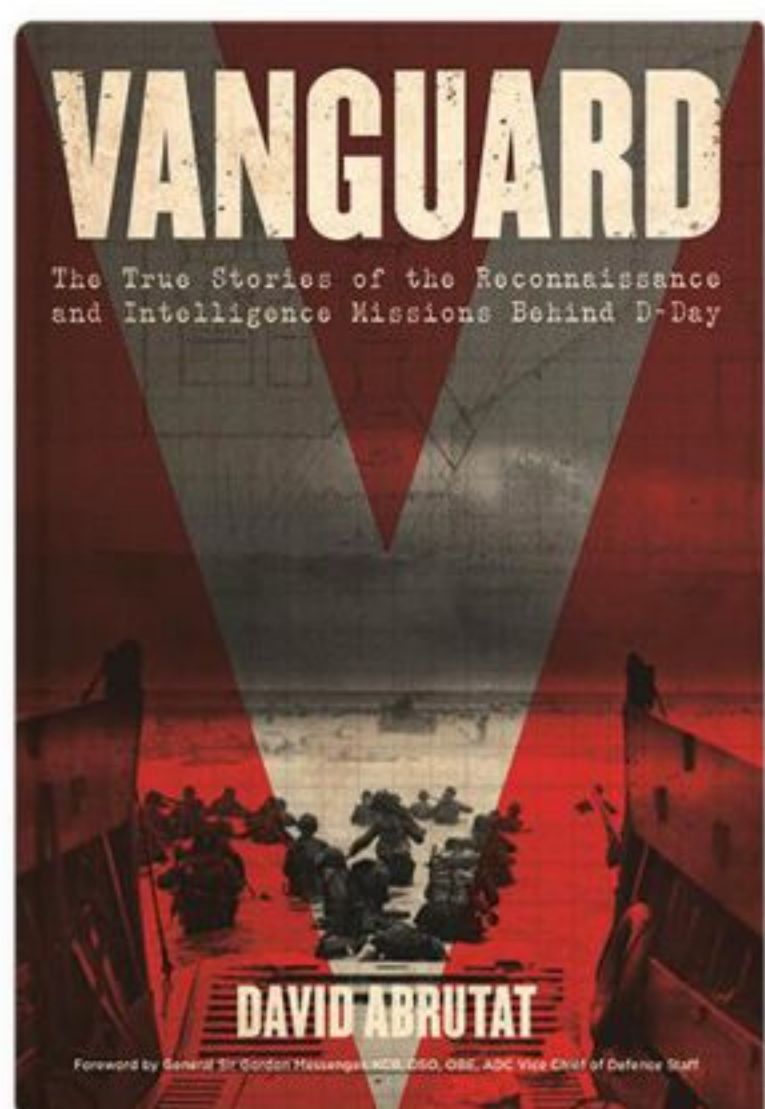
Recommended



George Marshall

David L. Roll

This new treatment of the celebrated general's life and service through both world wars draws on an array of primary sources, many published for the first time. The revelations challenge long-held assumptions about Marshall's life as well as re-examine his postwar roles as special envoy to China, secretary of state and secretary of defense.



Vanguard

David Abrutat

This study describes the Allies' intelligence collection and covert reconnaissance missions across Occupied France before the 1944 Normandy landings. Using documents and photographs, author Abrutat, a former Royal Marine commando, covers information operations, signals intelligence intercepts, and clandestine boat and diver teams.

Brown, who knew Reitsch and was interviewed by Mulley, described the pilot as "a fanatical Nazi," though she was never a party member.

Even absent their professional rivalry, von Stauffenberg certainly was less enthused about the Nazi regime than Reitsch. Possibly planning to fly her husband to Switzerland, she was shot down in a Bücker Bü 181 over Bavaria on April 8, 1945, a month before VE Day. She fell to a U.S. Ninth Air Force P-51 Mustang pilot, who claimed to have downed an FW-190, despite the Bücker's fixed gear.

Mulley's dual biography is thoroughly documented with 60 pages of notes and nearly 20 pages of sources. Her book fills a long-standing gap in World War II aviation history.

—Barrett Tillman

The Polar Bear Expedition: The Heroes of America's Forgotten Invasion of Russia, 1918–1919, by James Carl Nelson, William Morrow, New York, 2019, \$28.99

There are forgotten conflicts, and then there's the north Russia intervention, a cruise to the ends of the earth and then 200 miles upriver from that. The Allied expedition, begun as a defensive effort to prevent the considerable stock of Allied supplies sent to Russia from falling into German or Bolshevik hands, soon evolved into quixotic offensives aimed deep into Russia by an infinitesimal force of 4,600 Americans

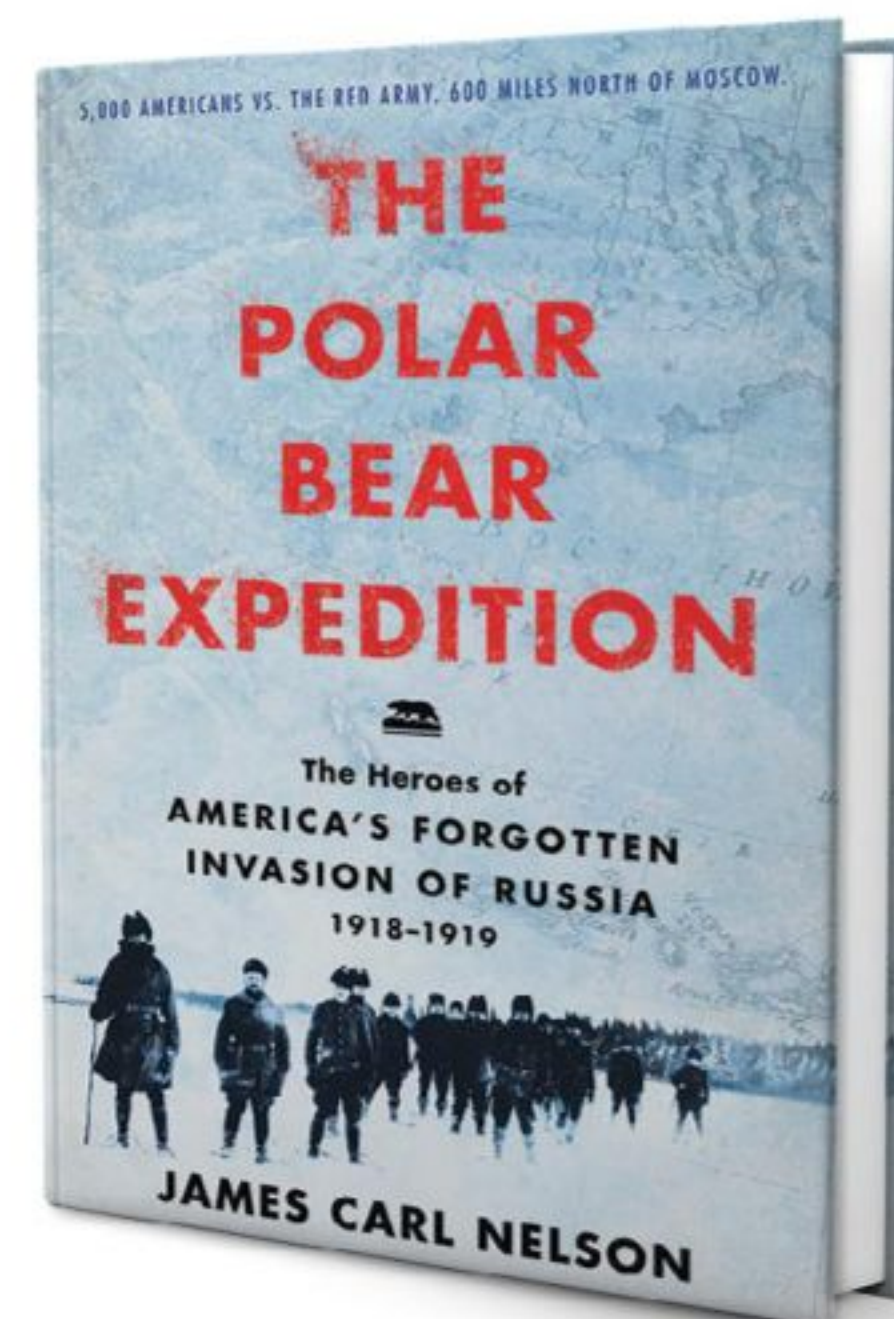
and 2,000 British, French, Canadians, Poles and White Russians. Such a campaign naturally did not go well, but it makes for a story well told in James Carl Nelson's account of the Americans dispatched on that frigid quest.

Dispatched to Archangel, the 339th U.S. Infantry Regiment largely comprised Michigan recruits, which, in the squinting logic of higher-ups, would make them well-suited for northern climes. They were unprepared for Archangel, let alone for expeditions down the Dvina and Vaga rivers in hopes of linking up with the renegade Czech Legion or perhaps driving on to Moscow. President Woodrow Wilson's hopes for the expedition were vague, Britain's were chimerical, and in this void the former won out under the direction of British commander Lt. Gen. Frederick Poole.

Things went surprisingly well until winter set in and Red Army opposition grew firmer, for a time directed by Leon Trotsky himself. The realities of arctic combat were never good: Guns would jam until they could be boiled (always convenient in the midst of combat); snowbound marches ensured soldiers would pour sweat, while any exposed flesh would freeze. The book notes even more Rabelaisian features, including an improvised second-story latrine cut over a barn from which protruded literal stalactites of frozen excrement. Then, of course, there was the 1919 influenza pandem-

ic, which made an awful time far worse.

A series of retreats in the depth of winter featured several implausible escapes against heavy odds amid yet more misery. News of the Armistice injected a sense of futility into Allied forces, prompting actual mutinies



among British and French troops, while one American company briefly refused duty. Propagandistic appeals from captured communist opponents—"Why are you fighting us? We are all working men. You American boys are shedding your blood way up here in Russia, and I ask you, for what reason?"—contributed to the general malaise.

Regardless, the brave men of the 339th Infantry performed extraordinarily well in difficult circumstances and disembarked in good order in fall 1919, taking with them eight Russian brides, while leaving behind fallen comrades retrieved as late as 1934. If overlooked, they at least chose their own nickname—"Polar Bears" was the coinage of no historian but the

soldiers themselves.

—Anthony Paletta

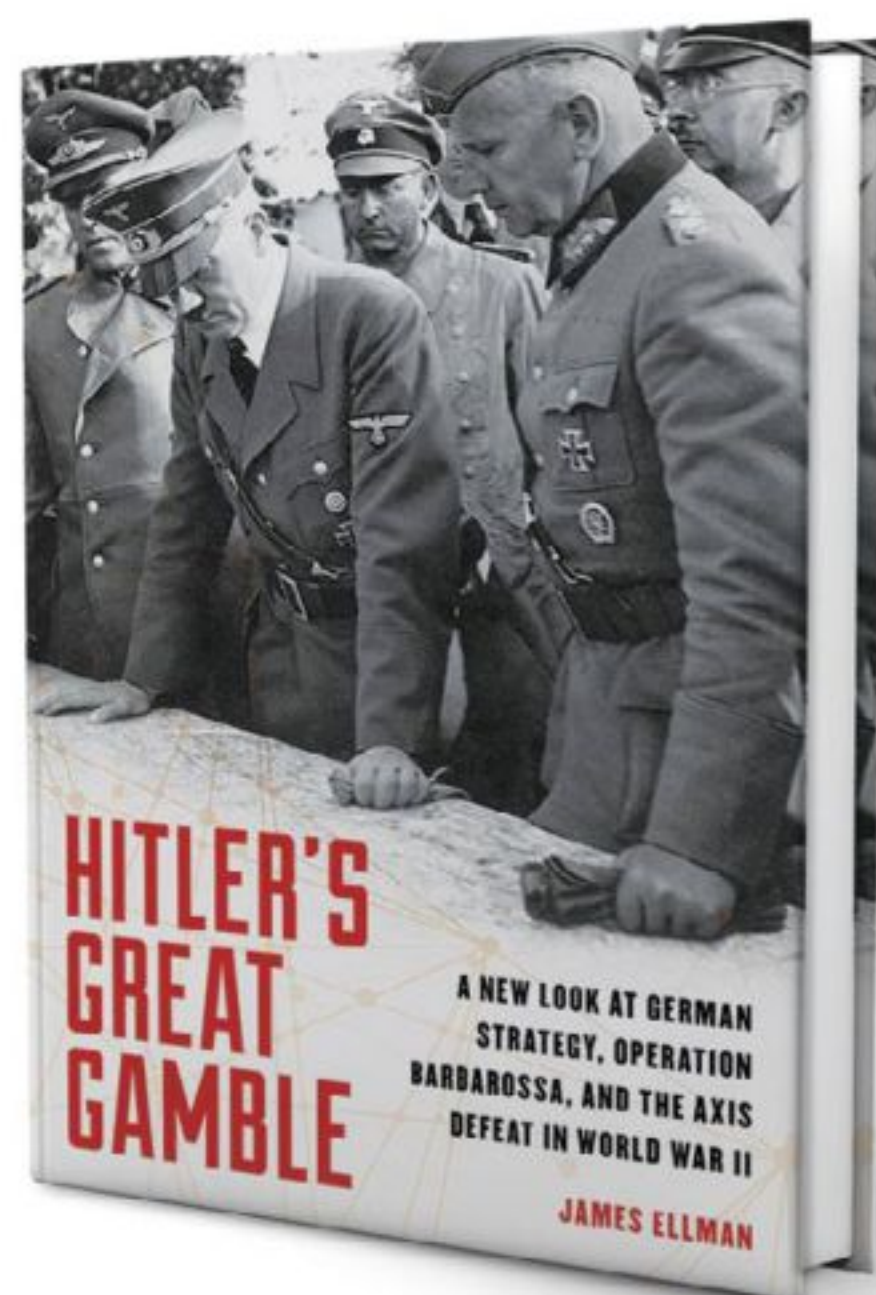
The Greatest of All Leathernecks: John Archer Lejeune and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, by Joseph Arthur Simon, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2019, \$44.95

“Seems every time there’s a war, the men in my family join the Marines.” Forty years before actor John Agar (himself a World War II Army Air Corps veteran, albeit as a stateside phys-ed instructor) spoke that line in the classic 1950 war film *Sands of Iwo Jima* such a sentiment would have implied a tradition of service in a minor support branch of the Navy, one whose very existence was precarious. The Marines’ transformation into an elite force, and John Archer Lejeune’s pre-eminent role in it, is the story Joseph Arthur Simon relates in *The Greatest of All Leathernecks*.

When Lejeune was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1890, advances in technology and naval professionalism had rendered obsolete the Marines’ original functions—to enforce naval discipline and supplement the firepower of smoothbore artillery. Minor conflicts during Lejeune’s first 15 years of service allowed the Leathernecks to prove their value in amphibious assaults and the control of naval bases, while Lejeune himself dem-

onstrated a level of professionalism that led to steady promotion and advanced studies at the Army War College. A stellar performance there assured his rapid rise to the top—command of the 4th Marine Brigade in the American Expeditionary Force during World War I, then of the U.S. Army’s 2nd Division, of which the brigade was a part.

Upon his 1920 appointment as its commandant Lejeune set about elevating the Marine Corps into a pil-



lar of the U.S. armed forces. Training infantry to the highest standards and massively increasing advanced studies for officers was just the beginning. There were such new branches of warfare as aviation to be embraced. Incentives and benefits were introduced to attract high-caliber recruits into the enlisted ranks. And Lejeune determined that Marine Corps strategists would be the first in history to engage in thorough and ongoing scientific and operational studies of modern amphibious operations.

The Greatest of All Leathernecks is not, for the most part, the story of battles and campaigns. It is, rather, a fascinating, highly readable and very well-researched account of the training, planning and seemingly mundane matters that combined to produce one of the greatest fighting forces in history.

—James Baresel

Hitler’s Great Gamble: A New Look at German Strategy, Operation Barbarossa and the Axis Defeat in World War II, by James Ellman, Stackpole Books, Guilford, Conn., 2019, \$34.95

What if Napoléon had B-17 Flying Fortresses at his disposal? What if Columbus had submarines? Counterfactual history has a deservedly gnarly reputation in scholarly quarters for its simple absurdity. That said, approached cautiously and analytically, such consideration of what Winston Churchill referred to as the “terrible ifs” of history can, in fact, be both illuminating and valuable.

Twenty years ago a New York publisher released *What If? The World’s Foremost Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*. Among other essays, Victor Davis Hanson proposed a Persian victory at Salamis, and Stephen Ambrose envisaged D-Day’s ultimate failure. Eminent military historians considering “what if” questions

that provide insight into what *did* happen provide a brilliant illustration of meaningful counterfactual history.

Hitler’s Great Gamble falls into this category. Investment banker-cum-historian James Ellman contemplates the outcome of Operation Barbarossa had Adolf Hitler been a better diplomat. Specifically, the author argues that if Japan, already occupying the Korean peninsula, had turned north toward the Soviet Union, and Finland had participated in the assault on Leningrad, Barbarossa had the potential to actually succeed. Implicit is that the war was lost before it started, as a consequence of diplomatic failure. In this vein Ellman definitely overplays his hand, dismissing everyone from William L. Shirer to Sir Ian Kershaw as dunderheads for suggesting otherwise.

It is problematic to suggest that Hitler, possessed of a growing sense of invincibility, had the potential to be an honest broker and candid partner. Or that imperial Japan was interested in German war aims or grand strategy. Still, Ellman’s unique if eccentric thesis does offer insight into why Barbarossa was Hitler’s best option. Had the *Führer* been a better diplomat, he would never have found himself in the tenuous position where such a “great gamble” was his best option.

—Bob Gordon

Hallowed Ground Hastings, England

By David T. Zabecki

When England's King Edward the Confessor died on Jan. 5, 1066, it set off a chain of events that changed the course of European history. As Edward had left no direct heir, the Witenagemot, a council of Anglo-Saxon notables, selected his brother-in-law, Harold Godwinson, as the new king. He was crowned in London on January 6 as Harold II. But there were other powerful claimants to the English throne. Foremost among them was William, Duke of Normandy. William claimed that some 15 years earlier Edward had chosen him as his successor, while those present at Edward's deathbed claimed the king identified Harold as his successor. Each considered the other a usurper.

Before acting, William secured support for his claim from Pope Alexander II. He also drew followers from across Western Europe, including Brittany, Flanders, Poitou, Burgundy,

The fighting went on all day, William's skilled archers proving especially deadly

Aquitaine and southern Italy. His adherents were mostly nobles' younger sons, attracted by the prospect of carving out fiefdoms in England should William prevail in battle. The unprecedented assembly foreshadowed the host of the Crusades. Over nine months William constructed an invasion fleet of more than 700 ships to transport his estimated 7,000 troops and 2,000 horses across the English Channel.

Harold, meanwhile, struggled to consolidate his power and massed an army in the south to resist William. In late September he was forced to march more than 200 miles north to Yorkshire to confront the invasion forces of Norwegian claimant Harald Hardrada. While the king's men crushed the enemy and slew Hardrada at Stamford Bridge on September 25, they sustained heavy casualties. Three days later William's troops landed in the south at Pevensey, the next day marching 12 miles east to Hastings, the coastal terminus of the main northern road to London. On learning of the Norman landing, Harold force-marched his exhausted men south to London. Without waiting for his strung-out column to consolidate or pausing to marshal reinforcements, the king then rushed south with his depleted force.

Meanwhile, William consolidated his army around Hastings in anticipation of Harold's arrival. He didn't have to wait long. On October 13 the vanguard of the king's fragmented forces reached Caldbec Hill, 7 miles northwest of Hastings. William marched to meet it, establishing a base on Telham Hill, about a half-mile away. Harold in turn moved forward and established a strong defensive line on Senlac Hill, which would force William's men to advance across low ground and then attack uphill. William deployed his army in three divisions, with Bretons on the left, Normans in the center, and French and other mercenaries on the right. Each division formed three lines, with archers in the first, heavily armed infantry in the second and mounted knights in the third. While both sides had roughly 7,000 to 7,500 troops, Harold's army comprised almost entirely infantry.

William opened the battle around 9 a.m. on October 14 with volleys of arrows. Firing uphill, his archers proved less than effective and his infantry and cavalry made little progress against the shield wall of Harold's infantry. But when the panicked Bretons fled under a hail of English missiles, Harold's troops on the right broke ranks to pursue. Riding into the fray, William managed to regroup his men, who counter-attacked. The fighting went on all day, William's archers proving especially deadly. Around dusk Harold was killed by an arrow to the eye, and the Saxon line finally crumbled. Ten weeks later, on Christmas Day, William was crowned William I of England at London's Westminster Abbey.

The 1066 campaign had widespread ramifications. Perhaps most important, it ended Scandinavian domination of the British Isles and locked them firmly into the orbit of Western Europe.

After the battle William's wife, Matilda, and her ladies-in-waiting crafted an epic record of the battle in needlepoint. The 231-foot-long, 20-inch-high Bayeux Tapestry is housed in a purpose-built museum within arrow's flight distance of Normandy's Bayeux Cathedral.

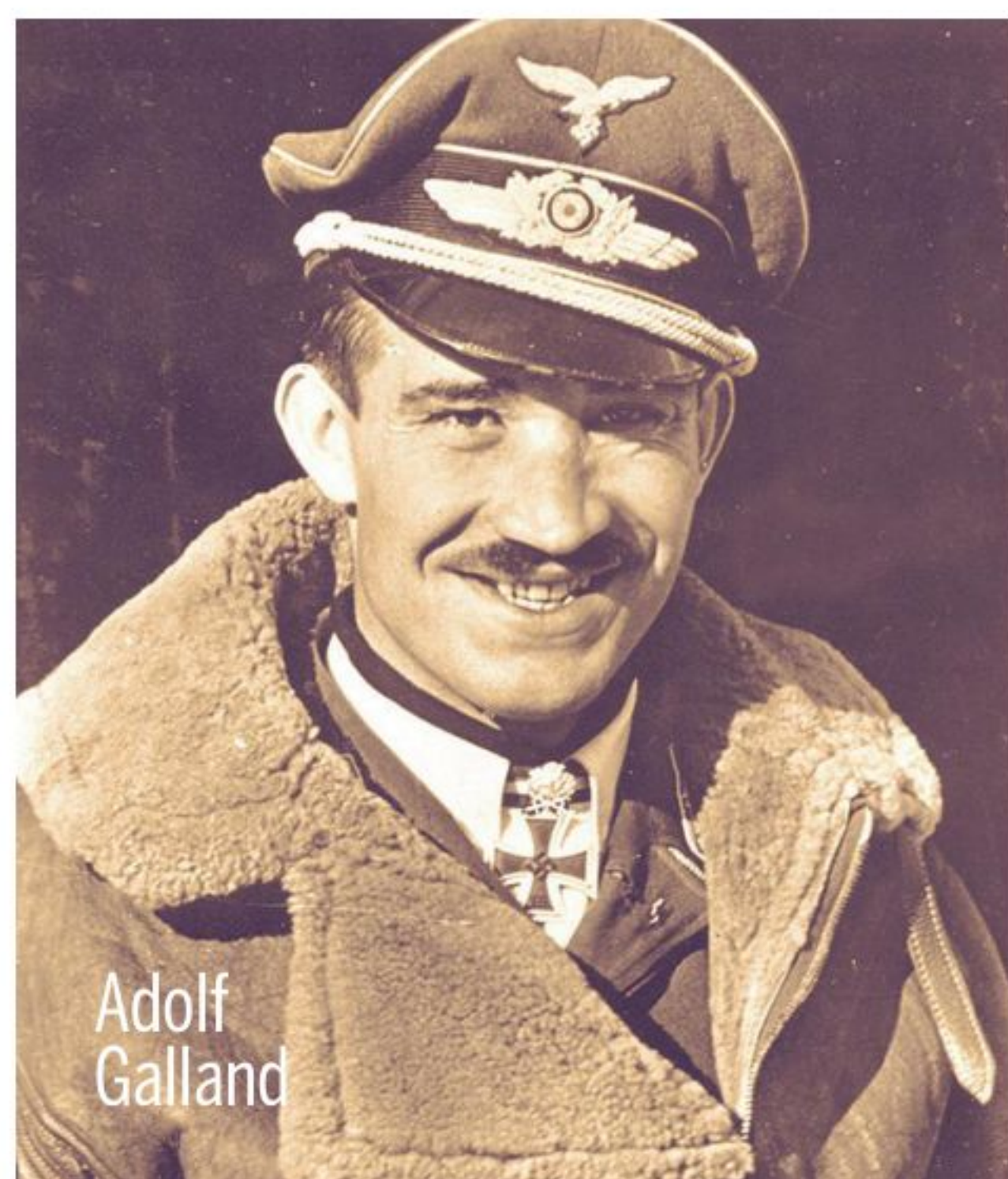
As an act of penance William ordered an abbey built on the field of combat, its high altar perched atop the reported site where Harold was felled by an arrow. The original church no longer stands; most of the extant structures date from the 13th to 16th centuries. But a stone tablet still marks the spot where the king died. The town of Battle has grown up around the site. The terrain from Telham Hill north, over which William's forces had to advance, remains largely open ground and would still present a challenging tactical problem to any attacker. **MH**



Above: Hastings locked the British Isles firmly into the orbit of Western Europe. A partially ruined Benedictine abbey stands on the site of the 1066 battle.



War Games



Geschwader Kommandeur

Can you match each of the following commanders to the German fighter wing he led?

1. Gotthard Sachsenberg
2. Johannes Steinhoff
3. Adolf Galland
4. Werner Mölders
5. Bruno Loerzer
6. Eduard von Schleich
7. Walter Oesau
8. Oskar von Boenigk
9. Hannes Trautloft
10. Hajo Herrmann

- ___ A. Jagdgeschwader 1, 1943
- ___ B. Jagdgeschwader 300, 1943
- ___ C. Jagdgeschwader II, 1918
- ___ D. Jagdgeschwader 26, 1940
- ___ E. Jagdgeschwader 77, 1943
- ___ F. Marine Feld Jagdgeschwader I, 1917
- ___ G. Jagdgeschwader III, 1918
- ___ H. Jagdgeschwader 54, 1940
- ___ I. Bavarian Jagdgeschwader IV, 1918
- ___ J. Jagdgeschwader 51, 1940

Answers: A7, B10, C8, D3, E2, F1, G5, H9, I6, J4



Carrier Strike!

Can you identify each airplane (its prominent target in parentheses)?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ___ A. Sopwith Camel (Tondern, 1918) | ___ F. Fairey Barracuda (Norway, 1943) |
| ___ B. Blackburn Skua (Norway, 1940) | ___ G. Grumman F6F-3 Hellcat (Truk, 1944) |
| ___ C. Aichi D3A1 (Ceylon, 1942) | ___ H. Curtiss SB2C-4 Helldiver (Okinawa, 1945) |
| ___ D. North American B-25B Mitchell (Japan, 1942) | ___ I. Vought F4U-4 Corsair (Chosin, 1950) |
| ___ E. Eastern Aircraft TBM-1 Avenger (Philippine Sea, 1944) | ___ J. Douglas A-4 Skyhawk (Vinh, 1968) |

Answers: A6, B1, C2, D7, E8, F10, G9, H5, I3, J4

Guelfs vs. Ghibellines

What do you know about the conflicts between popes and emperors that racked Italy?



Conrad II (in green sash) told of death sentence

1. Who, after being crowned Holy Roman emperor by Pope John XII, in 962, deposed him a year later?
A. Otto I B. Otto II
C. Henry IV D. Henry VII
2. What papist warlord eroded and finally broke Emperor Henry IV's power between 1090 and 1097?
A. Pope Urban II
B. Egbert I of Brunswick
C. Matilda of Tuscany
D. Welf I of Bavaria
3. Which battle, with more than 10,000 fatalities, was the bloodiest fought in medieval Italy?
A. Giglio, 1241
B. Cingoli, 1250
C. Fossalta, 1249
D. Montaperti, 1260
4. The execution of Conrad II of Sicily for treason in 1268 brought which dynasty to an end in Italy, Swabia and Jerusalem?
A. Anjou
B. Hohenstaufen
C. Spinola
D. Doria-Pamphili

Answers: A, C, D, B

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WHAT POKER HAND WAS WILD BILL HICKOK HOLDING WHEN SHOT DOWN IN A DEADWOOD SALOON?

Two pair (aces and eights),
four of a kind (spades),
a pair of aces, or three jacks?

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ANSWER: TWO PAIR (ACES AND EIGHTS). GUNNED DOWN WHILE PLAYING FIVE-CARD STUD IN A DEADWOOD SALOON BY JACK MCCALL, HICKOK WAS HOLDING BLACK ACES AND BLACK EIGHTS AS HIS "UP CARDS", THE IDENTITY OF THE FIFTH CARD, THE "HOLE CARD" IS THE SUBJECT OF DEBATE. THE HAND BECAME KNOWN AS "DEADMAN'S HAND".

Captured!

Admiral Preminger

Hollywood movie director Otto Preminger stands tall aboard a scale model of a U.S. Navy cruiser built for his 1965 World War II epic *In Harm's Way*. Preminger deployed a flotilla of model warships in a lagoon in the Gulf of Mexico, where a 40-man crew spent a month and \$1 million to film what ended up being a five-minute scene.



RALPH CRANE/LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION (GETTY IMAGES)



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